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The Black Man in White America

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BROWN BOMBER

Revised Edition

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TO MY CHILDREN

EMMA LOU VAN DEUSEN

Specialist in Child Welfare

Department of Public Welfare

Roswell, New Mexico

JOHN G. VAN DEUSEN, JR.

United States Army Air Corps

In giving you to different branches of your country's service, I offer my most priceless treasures. You are all that I have, all that I want, all that I have ever dreamed of. My most precious memories are those in which you have a part—the talks we have had, the books we have read together, the places we have seen. Do you remember the bears who came to see us on the Yellowstone, the shops we visited in Olivera Street, the tent we pitched in the high Sierras, or that tire we changed on the smoky slopes of Popocatepetl? Dave, Bill, Art, Carpy and the rest of those fraternity brothers you used to bring to our house have "gone across" or will be going soon. You will be joining them before many months have passed away. In the lonely silence of this room I miss you. But I would not have it otherwise, for I know that you are happy in the thought that you are doing what you can to build (we fondly hope) a better world where men are free. And so, my children, wherever you may be, whatever you may be doing; your father's thoughts, and hopes, and prayers are with you. *Semper fidelis.*

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The Black Man in White America

CHAPTER I

RACE INFERIORITY

I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.

The words are Shakespeare's, but the spirit is that of America. A black chef may cook the food, a mulatto waiter may serve it; but, in the South, no person with colored blood in his veins may break bread with a white. The Afro-American may carry suitcases and handle baggage, but he never enters a waiting room or railway coach reserved for whites except in the capacity of a servant. He may sweep and scrub floors, but he understands that he is not to enter a church or place of amusement where white people are worshipping or being entertained. It is vain to search the statute books for the laws enforcing race separation. Custom is stronger than any written law and there are certain well understood lines which the black man does not cross. These customs are sometimes defended on the ground that they reduce close contact and to that extent lessen the opportunities for race conflict. The real reason behind them is that the Negro is regarded as an "inferior race." It is not so much the presence of the Negro to which the whites object but to his presence in any other than an inferior capacity. Nowhere in the South is the Negro treated as an equal. Custom demands that he always enter the house by the back door. Custom demands that he address a white man as "Mr.," although the titles "Mr.," "Mrs.," and "Miss" are seldom applied to Negroes either by Southern whites or Southern newspapers. In every possible manner "race inferiority" is emphasized. So long as this "inferiority" is recognized there is no trouble; but were a Negro to cross the line of separation between the races he would be liable to be roughly handled.

From the point of view of the Negro, the most galling restrictions are the separate accommodations when traveling. Anyone

who has traveled in the South is familiar with the "Jim Crow" car. Tennessee, in 1881, was the first state to pass a law requiring railroads to furnish separate accommodations for Negroes and whites. Today, Missouri, West Virginia and Delaware are the only former slave-holding states which do not require the separation of races on railroads. Separation in waiting rooms, street cars, busses and steamboats is also a subject of legislation. Legally, the separate compartments must be "equal in comfort"; but the Negroes complain loudly both because the accommodations furnished them are inferior and because segregation is intended to be a constant reminder of their "inferiority." They declare that, while they pay the same railroad fare as whites, the space allotted them is insufficient with the result that they are often overcrowded. The coaches set aside for colored use are usually old ones, poorly ventilated, dirty and sometimes without any provision for drinking water. "Sometimes they are furnished wooden coaches which are dangerously sandwiched between the heavy steel coaches."¹ Often there is but one toilet which both men and women use.² A colored person, as a rule, is unable to get sleeping car accommodations south of Cincinnati. To eat in a dining car is against the custom. Even a congressman, Arthur W. Mitchell, Negro member from Illinois, was not permitted to remain in his Pullman after it entered the state of Arkansas.³ Serious hardships are thus imposed on colored persons of education and culture who, for business or pleasure, are required to make long journeys through the Southern states. The administration of segregation is in the hands of ticket agents, conductors and other minor functionaries. These are often prejudiced and offensive in their treatment of the Negro; thus segregation becomes doubly irritating. Following the presentation of "Green Pastures" at Austin, Texas, the cast was given a reception by Austin's leading citizens, headed by the governor of the state. But when Richard Harrison attempted to purchase a berth on a late night train, the station agent greeted him: "Nigger, you can't ride in no Pullman." Even "de Lawd" had to ride in a Jim Crow car.⁴

First-class hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, soda-fountains, theaters, concert halls and moving picture houses are for

¹ T. J. Woofter, Jr., *The Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 239.

² *Ibid.*, 238; Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration during the War*, 22; Mrs. L. H. Hammond, *In Black and White*, 239; Jerome Dowd, *The Negro in American Life*, 111; William J. Edwards, *Twenty-five Years in the Black Belt*, 95; W. O. Scroggs, *The Human Way*, 63.

³ *New York Times*, May 11, 1937, 1:2.

⁴ Edwin R. Embree, "Half Slave, Half Democrat," *American Mercury*, Mar., 1942, 54:323-30.

whites only. When "Green Pastures" played at the National Theater in Washington, Negroes were admitted only to the second balcony.⁵ They were barred entirely when the motion picture "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" played in the same city.⁶ How Hitler and Goebbles must have laughed when Marian Anderson, "the world's greatest contralto," was not permitted to sing in Constitution Hall by the lily-white Daughters of the American Revolution!⁷ It is reported that in most of the public buildings at Washington, including the House of Representatives, the cafeterias either segregate colored persons or refuse food entirely.⁸ Of course there are many Negroes in the South, and there must be eating and lodging places to accommodate those who travel. But if such places serve Negroes, they serve Negroes only. Like the white, the Negro demands relaxation but he must find his own amusement. Prior to the Civil War, Negroes were sometimes members of white churches. Today, law or custom prohibits Negroes from joining white churches, attending white schools and colleges, or joining white cultural organizations in the South.

But "race inferiority" is not exclusively a Southern dogma. In theory, Northern people are less affected by color prejudice than Southern. As a chattel on the auction block the Negro excited considerable Northern sympathy in slavery days, and as a victim of mob violence or Southern injustice many sentimental tears have been shed over him in the three-quarters of a century since slavery ended. Many Northern states have enacted "civil rights" laws prohibiting discriminations in public services and accommodations on account of color. But apparently there is a difference between sympathy for the Negro who is far away and the one who is actually present. It does not take much observation to discover that Negroes' rights are limited by tradition and custom in the North just as they are curtailed by custom and legislation in the South. The best hotels, restaurants and soda-fountains are almost always closed to those in whom a tincture of colored blood is detected. Even Booker T. Washington was once refused a room in a hotel at Boston, and Eddie Tolan, the world's fastest sprinter, was not allowed to sleep at the Chicago Athletic Club as were other members of his team.⁹ Not long ago a group of colored radio singers

⁵ *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1936, 25:2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 23, 1940, 16:6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1939, 18:3.

⁸ *Crisis*, Apr., 1940.

⁹ *Chicago Defender*, Sept. 6, 1930.

in New York City were requested by the Hotel Lincoln to use the rear elevator to the top floor where the studios of WGBS are located.¹⁰ The Hotel Gramatan of Bronxville found it necessary to make extensive repairs when a Negro organization desired to rent its ballroom.¹¹ These are not isolated cases. In restaurants the discrimination is not made openly. But the service is reluctantly and discourteously given. Negroes are required to wait long before their orders are taken. If the food eventually arrives, it may contain unusual quantities of salt. Often there are heavy over-charges, and various other ways are used to indicate that Negro patronage is not desired. Theaters commonly discriminate against Negroes. Certain portions of the gallery are usually set aside for them. If they attempt to purchase more desirable places they will be informed that the house is sold out. If the tickets are purchased by white friends, the usher will apologize profusely. He is sorry that the seats called for have just been taken by other parties; he will be glad to secure other places. One thing is almost certain; he will not seat them in the neighborhood of white patrons.

Even the Northern church has drawn the color line. Ministers at Newark, New Jersey, hesitated to invite the children of colored migrants to Sunday school, fearing it "would not do."¹² Negro members were not welcomed in Chicago churches lest "they might bring their friends."¹³ Rev. William S. Blackshear, rector of St. Matthew's, Brooklyn, received temporary publicity in 1929 by announcing that his was "a white church" and by adopting a policy of "discouraging the attendance of membership in this church of members of" the Negro race.¹⁴ Other "Christian" organizations which follow a policy of segregation are the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A.

As a rule Negroes are not permitted to use the public parks or public libraries in Southern cities, regardless of the fact that they may be taxpayers. Discrimination against Negroes in the public parks of Northern cities varies with the degree of antagonism against Negroes in the park neighborhood. Hannibal G. Duncan writes thus:

¹⁰ *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1931, 2:6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1936, 17:5.

¹² Helen B. Pendleton, "Cotton Pickers in Northern Cities," *Survey*, Feb. 17, 1917, 37:569-71.

¹³ Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago*, 325.

¹⁴ *New York World*, Sept. 17, 1929; *Literary Digest*, Oct. 12, 1929, 103:32-4. *Vid.* *New York Herald-Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1932, p. 1; "The Controversy in All Soul's Church, Harlem," *Literary Digest*, Nov. 12, 1932, 114:16-17.

Negroes are excluded from all the popular parks in Cincinnati, and even from the Municipal Bath House. In Indianapolis they come in contact with the "bungalo gangs" who beat them frightfully and run them out of the parks. In Chicago the white people, with ropes and guns, rid Gage Park of Negroes At Clemington, New Jersey—the Atlantic City for the poor—Negroes are allowed to go there but one day in the year In Boston the Negroes are practically excluded from many of the parks, playgrounds, baths, hospitals and museums.¹⁵

Negroes are kept out of public golf tournaments at Jackson Park, Chicago, by the requirement that participants be members of a golf club affiliated with the Western Golf Association.¹⁶ In 1919 much evidence was presented before the Commission on Race Relations to show that Negro children attempting to use parks and bathing beaches in Chicago were attacked by white gangs.¹⁷ If these gangs did not reflect the community feeling, they were at least tolerated by it, as nothing was done to suppress them. One park director remarked,

I would not choose personally to be responsible for the things that would happen outside my gates if I were responsible for bringing large groups (of Negroes) into Armour Square.¹⁸

Still another group of restrictions refer to the quarters of towns and cities in which Negroes may live. Where residential segregation exists, Negroes are unable to buy or rent houses outside the district reserved for them. Baltimore, Norfolk, Richmond, Atlanta, Dallas, St. Louis, Louisville and other cities have passed ordinances designating certain blocks as white and others as colored, and prohibiting either race from moving into the quarter assigned to the other. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People appealed the Louisville ordinance to the Supreme Court of the United States which decided (Nov., 1917) that segregation was unconstitutional.¹⁹ Despite this decision, New Orleans and Indianapolis have since adopted segregation ordinances, that of New Orleans being rejected by the Supreme Court in 1927. But race prejudice laughs at court decisions. The Negro is confined to certain districts in practically every Southern town and city, and New York, Chicago, Philadel-

¹⁵ *Changing Race Relations in the Border and Northern States*, 68-9.

¹⁶ *Negro in Chicago*, 277.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 286, 288-9, 616-18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278, 280.

¹⁹ *Buchanan vs. Warley*, 245 U. S., 60.

phia, Cleveland and Pittsburgh furnish evidences of segregation without legal sanction.

When we consider the treatment of the sick, the restrictions are not only galling but positively inhumane. Many Southern cities do not admit Negroes to the municipal hospitals. In November, 1927, a Negro boy who was injured in an auto accident was refused at hospitals in both Decatur and Athens, Alabama. He was finally admitted at Huntsville, where he died of pneumonia caused by unnecessary exposure and lack of medical care for several hours following the accident. In November, 1931, Miss Juliette Derricotte, dean of women at Fisk University and formerly national secretary of the Y.W.C.A., was injured in an auto wreck at Dalton, Georgia. The local hospital was for white people only, and she died in an ambulance on the road to Chattanooga, fifty miles away.²⁰ On March 11, 1937, Mrs. W. C. Handy, wife of the "blues" composer, suffering from cerebral hemorrhage, was compelled to wait in an ambulance outside Knickerbocker Hospital, New York City, for fifty-five minutes while authorities argued whether they could admit Negroes to private rooms. She died two hours later.²¹ When admitted to municipal hospitals, Negroes sometimes occupy a segregated ward. The space allotted them is usually disproportionate to their numbers. According to Dr. H. M. Green, president of the National Hospital Association, there was available in the United States (1928) one hospital bed for each 139 of the white population, but only one hospital bed for each 1,941 of the colored population. This means that at that time each white inhabitant of the United States had fourteen times as good a chance for proper hospital care as the colored citizen. In the matter of tuberculosis, a disease especially prevalent among Negroes, the colored patient had only one-twenty-fifth the opportunity for sanitarium care that the white patient had.²² Almost invariably, Negro physicians and surgeons are excluded from hospital staffs. According to Walter White, the American Red Cross, on November 5, 1941, issued "a confidential statement of policy" to

²⁰ *Crisis*, Nov. 6, 1931, 85-6; Peter Marshall Murray, *Hospital Provision for the Negro* (Am. Medical Assoc.), quoted by Trevor Bowen, *The Divine White Right*, 203-4.

²¹ *New York Times*, Mar. 27, 1937, 30:2.

²² Dr. H. M. Green, "Hospitals and Public Health Facilities for Negroes," *National Conf. of Social Work*, 1928, 178-80. Cf. Julius Rosenwald Fund, *Negro Hospitals, Available Statistics*, *passim*; C. S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 185; Weatherford & Johnson, *Race Relations*, 380.

blood plasma stations to the effect that Negro blood donors were not to be accepted.^{22a}

Many stores, especially clothing stores, discourage Negro patronage and refuse to allow customers to try on garments.²³ Colored ladies have been barred from rest rooms.²⁴ The color line is frequently drawn in barber shops and beauty parlors. Fraternal orders like the Elks, Masons and Odd Fellows do not admit Negroes, and they have separate lodges. Throughout the South the Negro is segregated in separate schools. Of late the movement has spread northward. In 1927 twelve hundred high school students at Gary, Indiana, went on strike and refused to attend classes until separate provisions had been made for twenty-four colored high school students.²⁵ A similar strike occurred in a Chicago high school in the fall of 1934.²⁶ Some Northern universities have quietly barred colored students entirely. The usually liberal Interfraternity Council of the University of Chicago refused positively to admit the Negro Kappa Alpha Psi to their group.²⁷

Segregation extends to the industrial world. In some Southern states laws require separate workrooms for Negroes, thus practically excluding them from establishments in which white workers are employed.²⁸ When Negroes are employed in Northern industry, separate wash rooms and toilets are frequently maintained. City ordinances at Atlanta and Charleston prohibit Negro barbers from handling white trade.²⁹

Thus Negroes are separated from whites wherever it is possible to enforce separation. They are segregated in definite housing areas. They are herded into separate waiting rooms, into special compartments on railroads and special parts of street cars. They are compelled to maintain separate hotels, restaurants, amusement and recreation centers. They are discriminated against in hospitals and Y.M.C.A.'s. They are restricted to certain occupations in which they receive the lowest wages. Their

^{22a} New York Times, Jan. 18, 1942, 16:5. Cf. Ibid., Jan. 27, 1942, 17:1.

²³ Duncan, *op. cit.*, 63-4; Frank U. Quillin, *The Color Line in Ohio*, 136; *Negro in Chicago*, 320.

²⁴ *Negro in Chicago*, 321.

²⁵ *School & Society*, Oct. 8, 29, 1927, 26:453, 563-4; *Literary Digest*, Oct. 22, 1927, 95:14.

²⁶ New York Times, Oct. 9, 1934, 2:4.

²⁷ *Literary Digest*, Apr. 3, 1937, 129:29-30.

²⁸ Paul Blanshard, *Labor in Southern Cotton Mills*, 68-9.

²⁹ C. S. Johnson, "Recent Gains in American Civilization," *World Tomorrow*, Jan., 1928, 15; "The Rising Tide of Prejudice," *Nation*, Mar. 10, 1926, 122:247.

children go to the poorest schools. White and colored pray to the same God, but in separate churches and, to make the separation complete, when they die they are often buried in separate cemeteries.

There is no subject on which the South is more a unit than in opposition to racial amalgamation. In order to preserve the prerogatives of the "superior race" it is essential that the "inferior race" remain "inferior." Hence there must be no intermarriage between whites and blacks. Such ideals did not prevent a good looking Negro woman from becoming the concubine of a planter, his sons or overseer in slavery times. And since the census of 1940 shows a great increase in mulattoes over the census of 1870, it is fair to suppose that racial crossing has not entirely ceased since the abolition of slavery. In all Southern states, and in thirteen others as well, intermarriage between blacks and whites is prohibited by law. If either party has a black grandparent, he is legally a Negro and a marriage license cannot be issued. Cohabitation outside of marriage may not be made the affair of the district attorney's office, but the Ku Klux Klan or some other organization bent on preserving "white supremacy" or "race purity" might feel it their duty to punish the offenders. Black men have been lynched in the South for the crime of mating with a white woman with her consent.³⁰ Apparently "race purity" does not necessitate the application of a segregation law in order to determine the exact racial composition of the prostitutes in the houses of ill fame in Southern cities.

In the North, friendships between the sexes of different races are very infrequent outside a few Northern cities. On rare occasions a Negro takes a white wife. In most Northern states such a union is legal, but "social equality" is not achieved by interracial mating. The white woman becomes socially black, and her colored husband is likely to lose whatever friends he may have had among the whites. Disagreeable as is the thought of amalgamation to most whites, it is scarcely less so to members of the other race. There is no justification for the spilling of so much printers' ink over a bogey which is advocated by hardly any recognized Negro leader.

Ever since reconstruction days, especially when the Republican Party has been in control of national politics, there have been a few Negro office holders in the South. But every attempt to

³⁰ *Crisis*, Nov., 1922, 37.

recognize the better part of the "inferior race" has been met by intense opposition on the part of the "superior race." In 1898 a mob at Lake City, South Carolina, murdered a colored man and killed a portion of his family for no other reason than that he had been appointed postmaster. The protests against the appointment of Dr. Crum as collector at Charleston (1902), the appointment of Mrs. Cox to the post office at Indianola, Mississippi (1903), and the appointment of A. E. Patterson (of Oklahoma) as register of the treasury (1913) were all based on prejudice. In like category was the resentment caused by President Roosevelt's dinner invitation to Booker T. Washington and Mrs. Hoover's inclusion of the wife of Chicago's colored congressman (Mrs. DePriest) as a guest at a White House reception.

Perhaps the largest body of data apparently substantiating the doctrine of racial inferiority are the United States Army tests applied to nearly two million draftees in 1917. The results of these tests showed a marked inferiority on the part of the Negro. The black man made lower scores than the white. Yet the validity of any conclusion as to relative mentality based on these tests is open to attack by reason of the nature, purpose and administration of the tests. In the first place, they were so timed that "5% or less of any average group would be able to finish them in the time allotted." The purpose was not to test native intelligence but to concentrate attention on candidates for the higher branches of military service. Since the number of Negroes needed in the higher branches was small, those who made low scores were usually not reexamined as was the case with whites. Yet 86.9 per cent of the Negroes who were reexamined in the alpha test did improve their scores on a second trial. Obviously any conclusion based on tests where the white had two opportunities to improve his score while the Negro had but one would be laughed out of court. Furthermore, over 65 per cent of the Negroes were examined in the beta test which, according to the psychological division of the surgeon-general's staff, "is not as satisfactory a test for illiterate Negro recruits as it is for illiterate whites." Finally, the fact that the scores of Northern Negroes were much higher than those of Southern Negroes gives point to the observation that there is a difference between mentality and educational opportunity.³¹

A comparison of school records and the results of intelligence tests given to Negro and white children is also open to criticism.

³¹ Edward Byron Reuter, *The American Race Problem*, 84-91.

Such tests purport to measure the mental ages of children in a given grade. The fact that a large number of colored pupils are retarded requires no demonstration. But the tests are faulty in that they do not take into consideration the causes of retardation, such as frequent absence from school due to indifferent parents or the necessity of working and, in the case of the children of Southern migrants, overcrowding, poor teaching, or the absence of school facilities. When the tests are given, as they were in some cases, for the purpose of determining the practicability of establishing separate racial schools, there is the possibility that personal bias may have entered into the result. Summarizing the evidence, Dr. Edward Byron Reuter says,

The Negro may be the intellectual inferior to the white racial stock, but to date no one has marshalled in proof of the position any body of evidence that has any scientific validity.³²

Professor J. M. Reinhardt, sociologist, of the University of Nebraska, declares,

Racial inferiority is by no means a self-evident fact.³³

To which Professor Otto Klineberg, of Columbia University, adds,

Until we can be certain that the same opportunities have been given to the Negro . . . as to the native-born white, any direct comparison of average test scores will be meaningless.³⁴

There are possibly a thousand Negroes who fill minor federal offices in the Southern states. They are mostly postal clerks, railway mail clerks and letter carriers. Their appointments were made as the result of a competitive civil service examination, thus giving the lie to the dogma of "race inferiority"; for if these particular Negroes received higher grades than competing whites they can hardly be said to be "inferior." The record of many Negroes in the public schools and in Northern colleges where they have been admitted to Phi Beta Kappa³⁵ does not suggest that the Negro is incapable of rising. To be sure many of them are illiterate, but so are many white people. The knock-out punch which

³² Reuter, *op. cit.*, 92.

³³ "Negro: Is he a Biological Inferior?" *American J. of Sociology*, Sept., 1927, 33:248-61.

³⁴ *Race Differences*, 163.

³⁵ The *Negro Year Book*, 1937-8, p. 2, lists 155 Negroes who have been elected to this society for distinguished scholarship from 1874 to 1936.

disposed of Max Schmeling in two minutes and four seconds has left much for Nazi anthropologists to explain. Jack Johnson and Joe Louis as heavyweight champions of the world; the victories of Eddie Tolan, Ralph Metcalfe, and Jesse Owens in the Olympic Games (1932 and 1936); and the inclusion of four Negroes on all-American football elevens³⁶—these are proofs that the Negro is not necessarily physically inferior. Alexander Dumas, Aleksandr Pushkin, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Claude McKay and Countee Cullen in literature; Bert Williams, Florence Mills, Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, and Richard Harrison on the stage; Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, Harry Burleigh, and Nathaniel Dett in music; George Washington Carver in science; Booker T. Washington, Robert Russa Moton, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mordecai W. Johnson and Kelly Miller in education—these are only a few instances in which members of the “inferior race” have risen far above the average of the “superior race.”

The mass of Negroes at the South accept discrimination without vocal protest; but the intelligentsia, residing mostly at the North, are bitterly resentful.

Opposition to segregation in homes, travel and work (says DuBois), does not show that Negroes are ashamed of their color and race. It merely shows that they have sense enough to know that if their homes are confined to the Negro quarter, they will get no sewerage or police protection, no paving or lights, and that white prostitutes will be openly housed next to their schools and churches.³⁷

The Chicago *Appeal* once took issue with Commander Booth of the Salvation Army, who was reported to have said in connection with work among Southern Negroes, “It would probably be just as well to segregate the races.” The remainder of Commander Booth’s remarks was lost upon the *Appeal*, which responded, “The Afro-Americans do not need any more Jim Crow Salvation. They would like a little real Christianity.”³⁸ Influential Negroes opposed “drawing a color line in France” when the War Department proposed to establish a base hospital for colored soldiers there,³⁹ and at the present time there is opposition to the creation

³⁶ Marshall, Minnesota, all-American end, 1905-6; Pollard, Brown, all-American half-back, 1916; Robeson, Rutgers, all-American end, 1918; Slater, Iowa, all-American tackle, 1921.

³⁷ *Crisis*, Jan., 1920, 109-10.

³⁸ *Appeal*, Mar. 4, 1911.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1918.

of separate racial units in the Army, Navy and Air Corps. In 1930 there was universal protest against sending colored Gold Star Mothers to France on a separate and inferior ship.⁴⁰

Sometimes a Negro takes a case to court and wins a verdict. Thus one Negro woman vindicated her right to enter a railroad car reserved for the use of ladies.⁴¹ Another recovered damages for being refused accommodation in a New York restaurant,⁴² and a third for discrimination in a theater.⁴³ The United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the removal of Congressman Mitchell from his Pullman was a discrimination forbidden by the Fourteenth Amendment and the Interstate Commerce Act.⁴⁴ But more often meanings have been read into the statutes which make the civil rights act quite ineffective. At various times the courts have decided that soda fountains, saloons, bowling alleys, shoe-shine parlors and cemeteries are not "places of public accommodation and amusement" within the meaning of the civil rights act.⁴⁵ The case of a colored man denied orchestra seats at a theater was dismissed on the ground that not the proprietor but his employees made the discrimination.⁴⁶ Judge Cook, of the Chicago Municipal Court, said,

I suppose I tried during the early part of 1918 and the summer of 1919 probably a half-dozen of these civil-rights cases. In every one of them that I tried, there was virtually a clear case against the defendant The jury, notwithstanding the plain evidence and the instructions of the court, went out and . . . would bring in a verdict of "Not Guilty" The white jury simply say that law was not the law of Illinois or they would not convict under such circumstances, and having once acquitted the man the court and the state were without remedy.⁴⁷

Race prejudice is as irrational as the primitive taboo. It does not draw any line between the intelligent and the ignorant, nor between the law abiding and the criminal. Its effect is to create a caste of untouchables whose shadow is contamination. Yet segregation is not a satisfactory solution to the Negro problem be-

⁴⁰ Chicago *Defender*, July 19, 1930; *Nation*, July 23, 1930, 131:85-6.

⁴¹ Williams vs. Chicago & Northwestern Railroad Co., 55 Ill., 185.

⁴² Lewis vs. Hitchcock, 10 Fed. 4.

⁴³ Baylies vs. Curry, 128 Ill. 287.

⁴⁴ New York *Times*, Apr. 29, 1941, 1:3.

⁴⁵ Cecil vs. Green, 60 Ill., App. 61; affirmed 161 Ill., 265; Keller vs. Koerner, 55 N.E. 1002; Johnson vs. Humphrey Pop Corn Co., Ohio Circuits, XXIV, 135:6; Burks vs. Basso, 73 N.E. 58; People ex rel. Gaskil vs. Forest Home Cemetery Co., 258 Ill. 36; 238 U. S. 606.

⁴⁶ Anderson vs. Rawlings, *Ohio Circuits*, X, 112-13.

⁴⁷ *Negro in Chicago*, 322.

cause it deprives the Negro of all opportunities to absorb the culture of the "superior race." If the Negro is really "inferior," his church, when divorced entirely from the white, must necessarily represent an inferior type of Christianity. His ideals, moral conduct, and standards of living will also be inferior. Poverty, ignorance and vice were never assets to any nation. Yet by treating the Negro as "inferior" and demanding that he remain an "inferior," we are creating all three. The most cultured groups of the colored race are those who have had contact with the cultured groups of the white race. Now that democracy means more to Americans than it has in generations, it would seem to be a suitable time to evaluate carefully our racial policy.

CHAPTER II

THE NEGRO AS A FARMER

The Civil War brought about far-reaching changes in the economic life of the South. The planters were impoverished. Their capital was invested in Confederate securities, in slaves and in land. The first were valueless; emancipation had destroyed the second so far as their property value was concerned. Only the plantations remained, to farm which they must adapt themselves to a system of paid labor and that with little or no cash capital. It was not long before many former "slave barons" were willing to divide their land into small parcels for sale to their former slaves or to white farmers on long time payments. Land values catapulted downward between 1860 and 1870, and far-sighted Negroes were able to purchase on advantageous terms. It has been frequently asserted that had the Negro worked industriously and saved his earnings he could have purchased his "forty acres and a mule" during this period of depressed land prices. But it must be remembered that most Negroes had not the slightest idea of business transactions nor any sense of economic values. It was only natural that they should prefer to spend their wages as they earned them and leave the question of land to the future in the hope of receiving it as a gift. By the time the Negro realized the importance of land ownership, economic conditions had become more stable and the golden opportunity had passed.

Prior to the war, poor whites had leased the outlying portions of plantations, paying the landlord one-fourth of the cotton produced and one-third of the corn. This was known as "share cropping." It was natural that the system should be extended to the Negro, the landlord furnishing cabin and land and taking some agreed-upon portion of the crop in lieu of rent. Frequently he provided the tenant with seed, tools and working animals. In such a case his share of the crop would naturally be larger. Being a partner in the enterprise, the landowner wished to make as much profit out of it as possible, and this could be done only by keeping the Negro at work. He or his overseer took personal charge, saw that the land was fertilized, the cotton properly chopped, and that every member of the family gave a maximum

amount of labor. If necessary, he reverted to antebellum days and disciplined his tenants. If the tenant got behind with his crops the landlord hired extra labor, charging the cost against the cropper's share at harvest time. Most Negroes had not the means to sustain themselves during the months when the cotton was growing. This led to a system of credit for food, clothes, tobacco, fodder for the mule and other supplies—"advances," they are called—furnished by a local merchant or from the plantation store, the merchant or landlord being secured by a lien on the growing crop. As there was some risk attached to making these advances, the price of supplies was raised from twenty to fifty per cent above prevailing cash prices.¹ Since the goods were purchased throughout the year and the average item ran for less than six months, it is apparent that the tenant actually paid interest at the rate of from forty to one hundred per cent.

A variation of the "share cropping" plan is the "standing rent" system. Under this plan the Negro paid a fixed rental for his land, either in cash or produce, and was henceforth relieved of white supervision. The merchant continued to make advances, taking as before a lien on the growing crop. Having no stake in the success of the tenant, the owner moved to town and became an absentee landlord. Many individuals possess sufficient mental alertness to benefit from freedom to direct their own enterprises. But the mass are not so fortunate. "Standing rent" does not mark an advance in the economic condition of most Negroes. Deprived of white leadership, they neglect their work and take more frequent holidays. The result is a poorer yield and the end of the crop year usually finds them in debt to the merchants.

Both the "share cropping" and "standing rent" systems are widely used in the South today. Whatever their necessity or advantages when they were adopted, these forms of tenancy are the curse of the South. When the tenant makes his contract in January, he knows that he will be cared for during the next nine months. He will not lose his job, and he will not be evicted from his cabin for non-payment of rent. Since the landlord must have labor, he knows that he will receive his rations. It may be a low standard

¹ The author desires to be conservative. Competent authorities state that the average difference between cash and time prices is as high as seventy per cent. Cf. P. O. Davis of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, "Negro Exodus and Southern Agriculture," *Review of Reviews*, Oct., 1923, 68:401-7; Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 18; Calvin B. Hoover, *Human Problems in Acreage Reduction in the South*, report to the Secretary of Agriculture and to the Administrator of the Agricultural Adjustment Act.

of living, but it is sufficient for existence. If he becomes ill he will receive medical care. By virtue of his contract, he has economic security—at least until his cotton has been picked and marketed. How many white industrial workers in Northern cities can say as much? Yet the system contains within itself the germs of economic stagnation. The very security which it affords encourages the Negro in thriftlessness, for he knows the white landlord will take care of him. The practice of mortgaging the crop before it is produced is an evil one for the merchant-landlord class are not willing to make advances on crops other than cotton and tobacco. Particularly do they discourage food crops, for corn might be destroyed by the neighbor's cow or sadly depleted by the tenant's fondness for roasting ears. Eager to obtain a maximum of credit, the tenant farmer gives over so much of his land to cotton that he cannot produce sufficient corn, hay and meat for his own needs. This is precisely what the landlord desires, for he grows food crops which he will sell to his tenants on credit at fancy prices.

Still another group of Negro rural workers is employed at wages. Those known to be unreliable are not able to rent land, and many of the best prefer to work for wages which are paid at the end of each week or month. In cotton picking time there is always a demand for extra hands, for few Negro families pick as much cotton as they can raise. At this season of the year wages are greatly in excess of the average wage rate, and the surrounding towns are emptied of their Negro population. White people in the towns find it difficult to keep servants during cotton-picking time. Wages vary with time and place. Just before the World War an able-bodied field hand received for his toil from daylight till dark, in some states, from fifty to sixty cents; in others, particularly in the Southwest, the wage was from eighty-five cents to one dollar;² and the great exodus during the World War resulted in raising wages somewhat. Farm wages in the North and West were almost double these rates.³ Today, depression has sent farm wages back to their old levels, although there is a wide variation between the states. In January, 1936, farm wages in the Black

² Melden, *op. cit.*, 158; George E. Haynes, "Negro Migration. Its Effect on Family and Community Life in the North," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1924, 62-75; Alfred Holt Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem*, 112; U. S. Dept. of Labor, *op. cit.*, 100.

³ U. S. Bur. of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1922, 284-5

Belt (including board) ranged from \$10.50 per month in Georgia to \$13 in Louisiana; or (without board) from \$15.75 in Georgia to \$20 in Arkansas.⁴ In the Western and border states the wages are somewhat higher. Taking the average monthly wage (without board) of the Southern states, \$22.75, and assuming that the worker is continuously employed at this wage, the average yearly income of the Southern rural agricultural worker appears to be \$273. As such a wage is below the level of a decent standard of living, the women and children are obliged to earn a portion of the family income.⁵

As in the case of "croppers," hired laborers are provided with a cabin, garden patch and pasture and, if they are industrious, they may raise vegetables for table use or part of a bale of cotton. This would increase their real wages to a point considerably higher than the cash received. But many Negroes are not sufficiently enterprising to take advantage of such opportunities.

It has been found that Negroes will sometimes rent land and secure advances and then, because someone in need of labor offers what seems to be high wages, desert their crop or so neglect it that it amounts to little. The situation is complicated by the fact that railroad and levee contractors and timber companies offer higher wages for a portion of the year than farmers can afford to pay. Formerly there was a considerable amount of desertion of the land for such work. Because of scarcity of labor at cotton picking time, crops deserted were frequently a total loss and landlords or merchants who had made advances half through a crop year suffered severely. It is natural that they should seek to protect themselves against losses of this character. The laws of most Southern states makes desertion of a crop after securing an advance a misdemeanor. In Alabama and Georgia the acceptance of an advance and subsequent non-performance of the contract is *prima facie* evidence of fraudulent intent at the time the contract was made.

Under the letter of the law the laborer or tenant quitting a contract should be brought back and lodged in jail. Practically, what

⁴ U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Agricultural Statistics, 1937*, 404-5. Cf. *Agricultural Situation, Oct. 1, 1937*, based on series of Farm Labor Studies by Tom Vasey and J. C. Folsom, Farm Security Administration and Bur. of Agricultural Economics.

⁵ The Children's Bureau has made two special studies of child labor in the Southern states: *Child Labor on Maryland Truck Farms* (1923), and *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers on Gulf Truck Farms* (1924). Of the Negro families investigated in the Maryland study, there were 322 children doing field work. Of these 26 were under eight years of age, 65 from eight to ten years, 77 from ten to twelve years, and 154 over twelve. Page 8.

often happens is that he is brought back and put on probation to his landlord, or fined and compelled to work out his fine by the landlord who pays the fine.⁶

Out of such circumstances peonage arises.

The most common form of peonage is found among the tenant croppers. Law or custom in several Southern states provides that a tenant may not leave his landlord and rent land elsewhere as long as any debt which he has contracted is unpaid. If the rainfall has been too scanty, if the boll weevil has destroyed the cotton, or the landlord's books show that the tenant has used his credit too freely in the matter of advances, he must enter into a new contract for another season. The tenant farmer has now become a peon, for while working to pay his debts he must borrow to live. Paying ruinous interest rates upon the supplies which he must purchase on credit, he is inextricably involved in debt—a debt which grows larger year by year. The only way by which such a tenant may escape is for him to induce some other white landowner to pay the debt and treat it as an advance. It has been asserted that whites holding a debt against a Negro will sometimes sell the claim—which is practically selling the Negro—to some farmer who wants labor.⁷ Possibly such action may not be strictly legal under the Thirteenth Amendment, but the judicial machinery of the South is in the hands of the whites and the miserable creature thus reduced to serfdom encounters difficulty in getting his case heard.

In 1903 federal secret service agents uncovered cases of peonage in Georgia. Since that time there have been numerous investigations, and indictments have been found. Some of these cases have been brought to trial. Verdicts of guilty have been obtained in the federal courts and penitentiary sentences imposed. There were four convictions for peonage at Anderson, South Carolina, in 1925. In 1927 four white men were convicted of peonage at Corpus Christi and Raymondville, Texas. Evidence of extensive peonage was also brought to light by the floods in the lower Mississippi Valley in 1927, the drought of 1930, and a Senate committee investigating flood control work carried on for the government by private contractors.⁸ In 1929 Orlando Kay Armstrong, professor of journalism at the University of Florida, cited cases of Negroes

⁶ T. J. Wootter, Jr., *The Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 92. *Vid.* Walter Wilson, "Cotton Peonage," *New Republic*, Dec. 16, 1931, 69:130-2.

⁷ Charles Rowan, "Has Slavery Gone with the Wind in Georgia?" *Crisis*, Feb., 1940, 44.

⁸ New York Times, Apr. 7, 1933, 28:3.

being sold in that state at from \$50 to \$150. In 1930-37, numerous cases of peonage came to light in Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana and Arkansas.⁹ A recent case is the indictment of William T. Cunningham and Hamilton McWhorter of Oglethorpe County, Georgia.¹⁰ The treatment accorded Negro peons is reminiscent of slavery days. Dr. W. T. B. Williams, investigating for the United States Department of Labor, says:

The beating of farm-hands on the large plantations in the Lower South is so common that many colored people look upon every great plantation as a peon camp; and in the saw mills and other public works it is not at all unusual for bosses to knock Negroes around with pieces of lumber or anything else that happens to come handy.¹¹

Despite attempts to fasten agricultural Negroes to a particular patch of soil, there is a considerable shift from one plantation to another at the end of the cotton year. According to Dr. Woofter, "fifty per cent of the tenants live on the farm only a year and then move elsewhere."¹² After an experience of five years at Dunleith Plantation, Alfred Holt Stone concludes that it is quite impossible "to make the average plantation Negro realize the remotest casual relation between stability and prosperity." He regards migration as a characteristic of the Negro's lack of reliability and believes it has little reference to his treatment. Some of his hands left

because we were unwilling to advance the amount of "Christmas money" to which they felt themselves entitled. Some departed with the rare frankness of a declaration that they "just wanted a change." Family troubles, the separation of husbands and wives, also account for their share. Still others went because of alleged dissatisfaction with the contract under which they had successfully been brought to a state of independence. . . . No planter among us can tell how many or which of his tenants of today will be his tenants of another year.¹³

The Southern Negro laborer is sometimes a child of impulse and takes no thought for the morrow; he lives only for today. Regular

⁹ Walter Wilson, *op. cit.*; Carlton Beals and Abel Plum, "Louisiana's Black Utopia," *Nation*, Oct. 30, 1935, 141:503-5; *New York World*, Nov. 24, 1929; *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1936, 42:3; Nov. 25, 1936, 46:2; Dec. 11, 1936, 3:1; Aug. 26, 1937, 4:3; *Chicago Defender*, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, 1930; Mar. 7, 14, 1931; "Slavery in Arkansas," *Time*, Dec. 7, 1936, p. 17.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, May 30, 1941, 34:1; *Crisis*, Jan., July, 1941, 8, 215.

¹¹ U. S. Dept. Labor, *Negro Migration of 1916-17*.

¹² *Op. cit.*, 63.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, 109f, 130ff, 143f, 192f.

work appears to be beyond him. If he needs a half dollar for lodge dues, or if he wants a "store" hat or a new suit, he will work long enough to earn the money; and not an hour longer. If he hires out to pick cotton, it probably will not be many days before he will have urgent business in the next town or a dangerous illness at home. Almost invariably he will try to get a part of his pay in advance. He may claim that his family needs medicine, that they are hungry, or that there is a pressing debt which must be paid. Once the money is in his possession he will be through with work until it is spent. If he finds that he can supply his creature wants with five days' work in a week, the Negro field hand may see no necessity of working six.

Just as a part of his woes may be traced to indolence, so it is probable that others have their origin in thriftlessness. W. H Thomas, himself a Negro, admits that his people "rarely exercise sound judgment in expenditure."¹⁴ Notwithstanding charges of fraud, when the crop settlements are made, a good deal of money passes into the hands of the Negroes; but it slips through their fingers. There is the temptation to gamble it away on a crap game, to spend it on women and whiskey, or to take pleasure trips. At this season of the year the country stores are filled with bright trash, cheap jewelry, "family" Bibles, rayon socks, silk dresses with an abundance of gold buttons, and long, bright-colored underwear. Negro women are conservative; they still wear it. The clothing, shoes and other articles which Southern plantation Negroes purchase are invariably the cheapest on the market; not in price but in utility. Fortunately for the white folk who want labor, the periods of prosperity do not last long. The week after crop settlement is almost sure to see the Negro tenant purchasing necessities on credit at the village store.

The living conditions of practically all classes of agricultural Negroes are deplorable. The one-room hovel is not in evidence as often as formerly, but it is still to be seen in too many communities. The majority of their cabins are tumbledown shacks—dirty, ill-smelling and poorly ventilated. The most elementary conveniences are usually lacking. Fireplaces have generally given place to cook stoves, but otherwise there is little furniture. A circus poster may decorate the walls; possibly a fly-specked picture of Lincoln or Robert E. Lee. Ignorance and poverty makes any improvement in low standards of living exceedingly slow. The almost

¹⁴ *The American Negro*, 54. Cf. Woofter, 15; Stone, 188f.

equal backwardness of their poor white neighbors precludes their learning from this source. The food has a monotonous sameness—salt pork, bacon, corn pone and molasses. Vegetables may be added if the family have the foresight to utilize the patches of land about the cabin. Sometimes a few fruit trees are growing about and there are always wild blackberries. The more progressive Negroes will preserve a considerable amount of fruit for winter use. Others own a pig which may be fed on table refuse, and chickens often help to vary the family menu. But as a rule there is no garden, no potato patch, and little live stock. Too frequently the cow is unmilked while the family buys butter at the village store. Ill-balanced diet reflects itself in poor health. In large areas of the Southeastern United States deaths from pellagra, a diet deficiency disease, are nine times the average for the country.

The late Booker T. Washington never ceased to urge upon his people the wisdom of land ownership, and many Southern Negroes have embraced the opportunity to own farms. The census of 1940 shows 22,250 Negro farm owners in Virginia, 18,245 in North Carolina, 17,084 in South Carolina, 15,692 in Alabama, 23,427 in Mississippi, 20,115 in Texas, 10,018 in Georgia, 10,553 in Arkansas, and 11,187 in Louisiana.¹⁵ But this probably states the case in too favorable a light since 29.9 per cent of the land "owned" is subject to mortgage.¹⁶ Furthermore, the census makes no distinction between the petty producer who owns a few acres and the large land owner. Probably at least three-fourths of the owners belong to the former class.

All things considered, the outlook of the Southern agricultural Negro is not hopeful. Both the number of owners and the acreage owned have been steadily declining since 1910. The most numerous class of Southern nonwhite farmers is the sharecropper; "other tenants" constitute the next most numerous class, followed by owners. All three classes decreased in number between 1930 and 1940. The census of 1920 showed 700,000 fewer Negroes in agriculture than in 1910, and the count of 1930 revealed a further falling off of 200,000. The enumeration of 1940 showed a further decrease of 200,000 despite the high rate of natural increase in this group.¹⁷ The displaced agricultural Negroes divide themselves into various classes: many become farm wage hands; others go to the

¹⁵ Bur. of Census, "Nonwhite Farm Operators, Land in Farms, and Value of Land and Buildings: 1940 and 1930," Series NP, No. 4, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Negroes in the United States, 1920-32*, 570.

¹⁷ Bur. of Census, Series NP, No. 4, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

towns and cities. A large number were forced onto the farm relief rolls, and other large numbers became migratory farm workers. These facts justify two conclusions: First, that the Southern rural Negro is sinking in the economic scale; and second, that he is rapidly abandoning the farm for the city. Indeed, a Bureau of the Census finds during the decade ending 1940 a decrease of 20,457 farms operated by Negroes in Alabama, 22,545 in Arkansas, 27,660 in Georgia, and 33,292 in Texas.¹⁸ This situation is due to maladjustment of the landlord-tenant relationship, occasionally manifesting itself in violence, but more frequently in inability to secure fair settlements, inability to make a living on wornout soil, and mechanization. The remark is frequently made, "We couldn't do any worse off on the road, so we left."¹⁹

The difficulty in securing satisfactory settlements is connected with the system of advances which keeps the tenant continually in debt. When food and clothing are bought on credit, there is every temptation to buy that which immediately costs nothing; and the end of the crop year frequently finds the tenant, after his rent is paid, unable to pay his debt to the store with the balance. Dishonesty on the part of white merchants adds to his difficulties, for the illiterate Negro keeps no books and it is easy and profitable to charge him fancy prices for supplies drawn, and just as easy and still more profitable to charge him with imaginary purchases. Usually in debt to the plantation store, Negroes find that no matter whether the crop be great or small, their debts are as big as their crops.²⁰ There are exceptions, of course, but they are exceptions. Negro leaders are persistent in charging that the race is being systematically cheated,²¹ and even Southern whites admit that there has been unfair dealing.²²

¹⁸ Bur. of Census, Nonwhite Farm Operators by Race, for Regions, Divisions, and States: 1940, series NP, No. 5, p. 3.

¹⁹ Constance E. M. Daniel, "Plain Facts about Negro Farming," *Brown American*, Nov., 1941.

²⁰ "In 1934 Dr. Harold Hoffsomer, of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, studied 2,000 Alabama cotton share tenants and found that only 25 per cent of their total years of farming had resulted in any profit whatever. The study of some 2,000 tenant families, in counties of five different states, by the Committee on Minority Groups in the Economic Recovery revealed that during 1934 the actual earnings of these families averaged about \$105 a year, or a monthly income of \$1.75 for each person." C. S. Johnson, *A Preface to Racial Understanding*, 34.

²¹ Charles M. Melden, *From Slave to Citizenship*, 158f; Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration during the War*, 92f; Herbert J. Seligmann, *The Negro Faces America*, 247f.

²² W. T. Robertson, mayor of Montgomery, in *Contemporary Review*, Sept., 1918, 114:300, 419; Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, Oct. 5, 1916, Jan. 26, 1919; T. J. Woofter, Jr., *The Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 28, 48.

The tenant farmer is at a further disadvantage because he cannot sell the cotton which his own hand produces. The law of most Southern states gives a valid title only to the landlord. This legal advantage has been so used as to produce grave discontent among Negro tenantry. The Negro has no means of knowing the price received for his cotton. The landlord may purchase it at a low price, selling it later on his own account at a higher figure. Even if he were honest, the Negro tenant, expecting to be cheated, would hardly be convinced of that fact. Until recent years the labor supply of the South has been insufficient to meet the needs of agriculture and there was a strong temptation for landlords to use every means to retain tenants on their land. By delaying settlements until late in the spring, when the next crop is already in the ground, the landlord could make it impossible for the colored tenant to move elsewhere; and he then had no choice but to accept any terms which his white patron offered. Many white land-owners are inclined to consider it a reflection on their character to be asked to render a statement of their tenant's account, and satisfy themselves by merely telling him that he is in debt.²³ There is a widespread opinion among Negroes that it is useless to appeal to the courts. The landlord is the only one who keeps a record and his book would be accepted as final by any court of law. Indeed, "it is not easy to get capable lawyers to take Negroes' cases against landlords, even when it is quite apparent injustice is being done them."²⁴

Continued cultivation of one crop has lessened soil fertility until some of the richest lands of the South have become unproductive. During the prosperous 'twenties farmers everywhere suffered from the curtailment of foreign markets and a consequent glut of agricultural produce at home. Cotton prices tumbled while other prices soared. A recent study of the National Resources Committee showed that in 1935-6 more than ninety per cent of the Southern sharecroppers made less than \$1,000; almost half of them made less than \$500.²⁵ Such an income will not meet farm operating expenses and provide the essentials for even a minimum standard of living. The

²³ Henderson H. Donald, "Negro Migration of 1916-1918," *Journal of Negro History*, Oct., 1921, 6:418; U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration of 1916-17*, 104; Walter F. White, "The Race Conflict in Arkansas," *Survey*, Dec. 13, 1919, 43:233-4.

²⁴ U. S. Dept. Labor, *op. cit.*, 104.

²⁵ Henry A. Wallace, The Place of the Negro in American Agriculture, address at Howard University, Mar. 2, 1940. Cf. Arthur F. Raper, *Preface to Peasantry*; T. J. Woofter, Jr., *The Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, Research Monograph V, Div. of Social Research, WPA, 1936, 83-6.

plight of the Negro farmer was more miserable because he was already in debt, dependent on a single crop, and ignorant of the mechanism of credit. Thousands of Negro farm owners were unable to pay their taxes or make mortgage payments. It is no wonder that a surprising number lost heart.

Mechanization makes it possible for Southern land to be tilled by fewer workers. Vice President Henry A. Wallace, while Secretary of Agriculture, stated that in 1931 twenty-five per cent fewer hours of man labor were required to take care of an acre of cotton than in 1911.²⁶ Perhaps the owner of a 160-acre farm had formerly required three tenants to plow, plant, cultivate and pick cotton. Now he has a tractor that will plow, plant and cultivate the cotton, while his pickers may be on relief in the city until he needs them. In a single Texas county increasing mechanization caused about 1,400 Negro sharecroppers to lose their places on the land in a five-year period.²⁷ With increased mechanization on southern farms, there has come a decreasing tendency to hire Negro laborers. Agriculture has become a semi-skilled occupation and therefore a white man's job. In many places agricultural labor is becoming a seasonal employment so far as the Negro is concerned. It is only when the cotton is ready to be picked that Negroes are sought in large numbers.

The call of industry has led many Negroes to move from the rural to the urban South or to the industrial centers of the North and West in quest of more permanent or better paid employment. Contrasted with a submarginal annual income on Southern farms, Negro laborers in Northern industrial centers in the middle-twenties were getting several dollars for an eight-hour day. Such wages, paid weekly, reveal a powerful reason why Negroes left Southern farms. The present pull of war work operates in the same way. If higher wages can secure better clothes, better housing, and larger educational opportunities, the migration is not an unhealthy one.

But most of the Negroes displaced by the tractors are unskilled and used only to farm work. They must take to the road in search of temporary agricultural employment. Twelve or fifteen thousand workers are needed for a few weeks to harvest the potato crop in Dade County, Florida. When the work is finished some of the workers move North into Broward County to harvest vegetables. Others move into Palm Beach County, where twenty thousand are

²⁶ Wallace, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Migrant Farm Labor: The Problem and Some Efforts to meet it. FSA Pub. 60, p. 8.

needed for work in sugar cane and other vegetables. The potato crop in St. Johns County will require three or four thousand workers, and Putnam and Alachua Counties will need two or three thousand more. Between eighty and ninety per cent of these temporary workers are Negroes drawn from the coastal plains of the Carolinas, the Delta region of Mississippi and Louisiana, and Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Once the Florida crop is harvested, the migrants follow the potato harvest up the Eastern seaboard into the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland and New Jersey. Four or five thousand workers are required to dig potatoes in New Jersey. The laborers are secured by contractors who make agreements with the individual farmers to dig, grade, and sack potatoes at a fixed rate. The workers receive their pay from the contractor. He collects transportation from the workers and charges them for everything they get. His real profits lie in exploiting the workers. Generally these Negroes are in debt from ten to fifty dollars to the contractor before they earn a dime. New Jersey law requires the contractor to remove them from the state at the end of the crop season. If they do not have the money for transportation home, he takes them to Virginia and leaves them there. Fifteen or twenty thousand more Negroes are required for a few weeks to pick strawberries in North Carolina. Ten or fifteen thousand more migrants move into Arkansas to pick strawberries, beans, apples, grapes, tomatoes, peaches and cherries. Ultimately some of them get as far north as Michigan, where the fruit harvest lasts from latter May to early October. Mobility of families tends to breed instability in the lives of the children. They have few opportunities for education.

Federal projects for farm relief have not been of material assistance to the Negro farmer. Mr. Hoover's Federal Farm Board failed to help because Negro farmers were generally excluded from white cooperative associations and lacked the leadership or initiative to form associations of their own. Loans from the Board's \$500,000,000 fund were made to farmers' associations only; it did not contact the individual farmer. The Board's subsidiary, the Cotton Stabilization Corporation, attempted to peg prices by holding large stocks of cotton off the market. But this could be of benefit only to the large producer or cotton merchant who could afford to wait for the higher prices which the artificially created cotton shortage was supposed to produce. The loans of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation were of large denomination; hence they could not be of great value to the small farmers of either race. The loans of the Regional Agricultural Credit Cor-

poration were smaller but the collateral requirements were too heavy to be met by small farmers. The loans of the Federal Land Banks were likewise useless since they were limited to members of loan associations. The Feed, Seed and Fertilizer loans were more direct. The maximum, in each case, was \$250. But since the government required a first mortgage on crops or livestock (which, in the tenant's case, were already mortgaged to the landlord), even this form of credit appeared to be closed. Many landlords enabled their tenants to apply for these loans by waiving their own first mortgages. But it is not usual for colored farmers in the Black Belt to handle much money, and when the colored tenant arranged for a government loan the white landlord usually arranged to get control of the check. He then deposited it to his own account, purchased the supplies required at cash prices and sold them to the tenant as needed at credit prices. The government loan cost the tenant six per cent interest, and he paid a still higher rate to the landlord for taking care of the money and selling him the supplies at credit prices. Cases have been reported in which the landlord has taken the loan money and applied it to the tenant's past debts.²⁸ Irregularities have also crept into the relief work of the American Red Cross, for the distribution of supplies is usually in the hands of the county committee, composed of the leading planters and merchants. Charges have been made that tenants have been debited on the landlord's books for Red Cross supplies and made to pay for them out of the next year's crop.²⁹

Nor have the essential agricultural measures of the New Deal been more conspicuous for their success. They were based upon the idea of raising farm prices by eliminating surpluses—by destruction if necessary. The program which the Agricultural Adjustment Administration attempted to "sell" in the Cotton Belt was that the farmer should make contracts with the government to plow under a specified portion of his cotton, receiving compensation either in cash or in options on cotton which the government owned at the rate of six cents a pound. As it was expected that "planned production" would raise the price of cotton to about ten cents, cotton farmers saw visions of a comfortable profit. It is probable that most Negro croppers had but a vague idea of the economics of the situation. They were deeply in debt for "advances" made in previous years; at current cotton prices it was

²⁸ Charles S. Johnson, *The Economic Status of Negroes*, 27-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30; *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 1935, 24:4.

impossible to discharge the debt with the proceeds of their crop. But if they consented to destroy their crop the government would offer remuneration. Under various kinds of pressure, Southern farmers consented to plow under 10,000,000 acres of cotton. Almost all of the small farmers took the "cash" rather than the options on government-owned cotton. Whether the farmer or his creditor would get the money was a question which the local agent probably did not touch on at the time. In practice what happened was about as follows: If the farmer was in debt to the government for a seed loan, the check was made out jointly to him and the agency through which the loan was secured. It was sent to the county agent with instructions to get the farmer to endorse the check. It was then sent to the other payee who cashed the check and remitted the balance, if any. Private creditors were equally well cared for. The names of the creditors who held a mortgage on the crop were listed in the contract which the farmer signed when he pledged himself to plow under his cotton. The county agent sometimes delivered the croppers' checks to the landlord on the theory that "it isn't customary for niggers to get checks." The result was that many a peon cropper, clad in a patchwork of rags, plowed under his cotton and got nothing for his season's labor. Query: Was the object of the A.A.A. to give the farmer more purchasing power or to help Southern landlords to collect their debts? In the meantime, the combination of N.R.A., processing taxes, and currency depreciation was boosting the price of commodities.

In the following year (1934) the government sought to avoid the "plow-under" by making contracts to reduce cotton acreage. In the furtherance of this plan it offered a subsidy of four and one-half cents a pound for the cotton which would have been produced on the acreage withdrawn from production. But again the landlord received the lion's share of the benefit, for the contract gave him four cents a pound for the cotton withdrawn from production, while the tenant received but a half cent. The A.A.A., by pegging cotton prices, was of assistance to the large landowner. But, so far as the Negro was concerned, the cotton reduction program merely resulted in a reduction of the number of tenant contracts. Any scheme to limit cotton production cannot fail to accomplish the same result. As a class, the Negro is totally ignorant of general farming, and a reduction of cotton bales must be accompanied by a reduction of cotton producing Negroes. Mr. Norman Thomas declared that from 15 to 20 per cent of the share croppers

were "sent down the road" as a result of Mr. Roosevelt's experiment in "planned economy."³⁰ Those turned adrift must journey to the city in a dubious quest of employment or be thrown on doubtful charity. For those who remain on the plantation, an over-supply of labor means lower wages and more intensive exploitation.

After the Supreme Court declared the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional, the New Deal attempted to continue its objectives under the Soil Conservation Act (1936). The object of this measure was to shift 30,000,000 acres of land from soil depleting crops to soil conserving crops. The method was the payment of a subsidy of \$10 an acre to farmers who would join a county producers' association and meet certain planting requirements. As in previous legislation, the major portion of the bonus was to accrue to the benefit of the owner of the land rather than the tenant. Dr. Monroe N. Work writes thus:

Many are raising the question whether under the new Soil Conservation Act, Negro farmers, particularly tenants, will fare any better than they did under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, for the old Agricultural Adjustment Administration has been designated as the agency to administer the new Soil Conservation law. The set-up per state, county and community committees are also practically the same as under the Agricultural Adjustment Act.³¹

The Farm Security Administration is doing a better job. Its rehabilitation loans are made to families which had exhausted their own resources and could not get credit elsewhere on reasonable terms. The F.S.A. provides short-term loans, averaging \$300 or \$400, enabling them to buy the things they need. Along with the loan, the farmer receives advice on good farming methods from technically-trained supervisors. Always at the heart of the plan is the production of the family's food and the growing of cash crops other than cotton. In 1939 a survey of typical Southern rehabilitation families, including some 50,000 Negroes, showed that they had increased their average net worth from \$451 per family to \$752: a total gain of \$35,000,000. More than 900,000 farm families have been helped in this manner; about 122,000 families have already paid their loans in full.³² The passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (1937) made possible a second step in rehabilitation,

³⁰ *New York Times*, May 10, 1934, 41:4.

³¹ *Negro Year Book*, 1937-8, 24.

³² Henry C. Wallace, *The Place of the Negro in American Agriculture*; Wallace, *Toward National Unity*, 6; *Migrant Farm Labor: The Problem and efforts to meet it*, 14.

opening the possibility of land ownership to farm tenants without the necessary credit to achieve it. These three per cent loans are amortized over a forty year period.³³ The Farm Security Administration has found that decent farm houses can be built in the South for less than \$1,500. The cost of a house of that kind can be amortized over a 40-year period at about \$60 a year. The U.S.H.A. is now embarking on a rural program with the cooperation of the F.S.A. However, unless additional funds are forthcoming, little will be accomplished for farm families.³⁴ Hundreds of other farm families have been assisted in moving from submarginal lands and settling on model "homestead projects." In January, 1940, 1,800 Negro families were living on thirty-one such projects in thirteen Southern states.³⁵

The most helpful aspect of Southern rural life is found in the work of the farm and home demonstrators. The farm demonstrator is usually a practical farmer who has the additional advantages of special training in scientific methods. He is employed by the Federal Department of Agriculture to give demonstration work in his county or district. He gives advice on the qualities of seed and types of fertilizers, and attempts to induce farmers to follow modern methods. The increase in the value of farm crops since 1910 testifies to the value of such work. Unfortunately the colored farmers have not received their fair proportion of such training. Funds from the state and federal governments are available only when the county contributes its share, and lack of interest in the welfare of the colored farmer has led to neglect in the appointing of colored agents.

³³ Migrant Farm Labor, 14; Constance E. H. Daniel, "The Negro Farm Owner isn't licked," *Opportunity*, June, 1939, 178; *New York Age*, July 18, 1942.

³⁴ Robert C. Weaver, "Negroes Need Housing," *Crisis*, May, 1940, 138.

³⁵ Wallace, Toward National Unity, 6; Dept. of Agriculture, *The Negro in American Agriculture*, 9.

CHAPTER III

THE EXODUS

Population movements are not new in the history of the Negro race. Ever since the War between the States a small rivulet of Negro migration has flowed steadily northward. Each succeeding census has disclosed that the border states, Virginia, Maryland and Kentucky, were becoming whiter and whiter. But, for a long time, the most significant movement of Negro populations was toward the Southwest where the unsettled lands of Texas and Arkansas called loudly for development. In 1879 Kansas became the "Promised Land" and there was a sudden rush in that direction. Until the World War the migration northward had not assumed large proportions. In spite of the universal belief among Southern Negroes that the North has less color prejudice than the South, that it grants to black men a nearer approximation of equal justice in the courts, equal opportunities in education, and an equal share in the ballot with white men, in 1910 only thirteen per cent of America's Negroes dwelt in the section where these reputed advantages were to be had. The answer to this seeming paradox lies in the fact that the North would not support Negroes. The European immigrant performed most of the rough labor, such as sewer digging and railroad section work, and most labor unions excluded the Negro from membership. Regardless of qualifications, most Northern Negroes at this time found themselves forced into domestic and personal service or restricted to odd jobs at unskilled labor. History does not show many peoples who have migrated because of persecution alone. The Negro is not dissimilar to others, and where no economic basis was assured, he preferred to endure those ills he had rather than fly to others he knew not of.

In 1915, however, a northward migration began which historians will probably record as one of the significant folk-movements of history. The migration may be divided into two phases. The first phase began in 1915, reached its flood in 1917, and continued at a decreasing rate until 1920 when, because of economic depression, it almost ceased; the second phase started in 1922 and continued until the depression of 1929 put an end to prosperity.

The estimates of the United States Department of Labor in-

dicate that between 400,000 and 500,000 Negroes shifted from South to North between 1915 and 1920. Not all these remained in the North. The cancellation of war contracts in 1918 brought an end to the temporary prosperity and reversed the tide of migration southward. The census of 1920 showed that the number of Southern-born Negroes living in the North had increased by only 330,000 since 1910. The rest had either returned to the South or had died. The northward moving Negroes showed a tendency to concentrate in the Middle Atlantic and East North Central states. The former section showed a gain of 43.6 per cent in 1920, while the latter gained 71 per cent. This gain was far in excess of the rate of increase among Negroes in the entire United States (6.5 per cent) for the ten year period. In contrast to an increase of 47.9 per cent in New York, 46.7 per cent in Pennsylvania, 67.1 per cent in Ohio and Illinois, and 251 per cent in Michigan, the census tables show that Mississippi sustained a loss of 74,303 (7.4 per cent) Negroes, Kentucky 25,718 (9.8 per cent), Tennessee 21,330 (4.5 per cent), Louisiana 13,617 (1.9 per cent), and Alabama 7,630 (.8 per cent). The rates of increase in Virginia (2.89 per cent), South Carolina (3.5 per cent), and Georgia (2.5 per cent) are so far below the normal birthrate as to indicate a large departure from those states as well. The amount of emigration must have been vastly greater than these figures indicate for mere statistics of loss or gain fail to take the birthrate into account.

Estimates of the amount of migration are based upon the receipts of railroad ticket offices and the shifting addresses of insurance companies. From April 1, 1916, to May 1, 1917, 12,731 persons left the Birmingham district over one railroad. Probably the three other railroads running north from Birmingham carried at least as many more. The points of destination show that most of them were coal miners, bound for the coal fields of Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania.¹ To fill the vacuum thus created in the Birmingham district, Negroes were drawn from all parts of the state as well as from Mississippi, Georgia and Florida. The Department of Labor found (1919) that 75 per cent of the 3,600 miners employed by the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company had come from the farms within the preceding twelve months. In the Spaulding mine of the Republic Iron and Steel Company, 225 out of a total of 336 men had been in the employ of the company less than two years. In two other mines of that

¹ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 55.

company 400 out of 812 and 460 out of 624 had been employed within two years.² Basing his figures on the auditing departments of several railroads handling the traffic out of Alabama, the Commissioner of Agriculture comes to the conclusion that 90,000 Negroes left that state during the war period. This figure is accepted by Dr. W. T. B. Williams in the Department of Labor report.³ Dr. Williams also estimates that 100,000 Negroes left Mississippi during the war period, basing his figures on estimates made by officials of insurance companies.⁴ Other estimates, based on the records of auditing departments of railroads handling traffic out of the state, are not greatly dissimilar.

In 1921 the United States placed immigration from foreign countries on a quota basis. As prosperity increased, the labor available proved unequal to the demands of industry, and in 1922 a northward migration of Negroes began again. The number of migrants during this period at least equaled that of the war period. A release from the Department of Labor stated that, for the year ending September 1, 1923, 478,700 Negroes had left Southern homes for the North.⁵ The director of the Detroit Urban League thought at least 500,000 Negroes had moved North since the beginning of 1922.⁶ While not all of these remained, the census of 1930 showed an increase of 978,666 Negroes living outside the South or 957,574 more than the normal increase by birth. The Negro population of Virginia decreased by 39,852 (5.8 per cent), of South Carolina by 71,038 (8.2 per cent), of Georgia by 135,240 (11.2 per cent), and of Kentucky by 9,898 (4.2 per cent); while the increases of Tennessee (5.7 per cent), Alabama (4.9 per cent), and Arkansas (1.3 per cent) are so slight as to indicate heavy withdrawals from those states as well.

Tabulations of the results of conversations of investigators with migrants, questionnaires, and the resolutions of conventions of representative Negro leaders give us clues to causes of the movement. First, there are a series of economic causes: (1) insecurity of property caused by high mortgage and interest rates and lack of credit facilities, (2) low wages, (3) crop failures due to boll weevil and floods, and resulting unemployment, (4) the labor demands of the North. Second, comes a series of social causes:

² U. S. Dept. Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 63-4.

³ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1924, 18:762-4.

⁶ Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States*, 285.

(1) discontent of croppers and tenants because of alleged unfair treatment, (2) Jim Crow legislation, (3) discontent with living conditions in the segregated areas of Southern cities, (4) insecurity of life occasioned by rumors of lynching and mob violence, (5) failure to secure justice in the courts, (6) exclusion from jury service, (7) denial of the right to vote, (8) poor school facilities. Lastly, there are a series of personal influences such as: (1) letters from relatives and friends which picture the attractiveness of the North, (2) activities of labor agents, (3) propaganda of the Negro press, (4) desire for travel, and the like.

There can be no doubt that, in the beginning, the economic causes were the most important. The Negro came North for the same reason that has impelled human migratory movements since the time of Abraham—to better his condition. The low pay which the Southern Negro received had been a long standing grievance. Early in the war food prices began to rise, but wages lagged. In 1915 Southern farm labor averaged around seventy-five cents a day, some counties paying as low as forty cents, and others reaching a maximum of one dollar.⁷ In the towns, saw-mills, cotton presses and cotton oil mills were paying from \$1 to \$1.50 a day while the wages of skilled laborers, such as carpenters and brick-layers, ranged from \$2 to \$2.50. Women in domestic service reached from \$1.50 to \$3 a week and men about \$5 a week, including board.⁸ These figures demonstrate the superiority of city over country wages in the South, but in the Northern cities unskilled labor was receiving from \$3 to \$8 a day.

Added to this pull was a push from the Southern rural districts. In 1892 the cotton boll weevil crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico. At first it spread slowly northward and eastward. But in 1915 the cotton crops of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana were almost wiped out by the weevil, and there was considerable damage in Georgia, Florida and other cotton growing states. Many planters ceased raising cotton and turned to grain and forage crops and livestock. The Southern Negro is preeminently a cotton farmer. He has never been encouraged to raise anything else. He knows little about the cultivation of clover and beans, and has not been too successful with corn and livestock. At any rate, the reorganization of agriculture behind the boll weevil required a smaller

⁷ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 66-7, 103; George Edmund Haynes, *The Negro at Work during World War and during Reconstruction*, 10, 82.

⁸ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 66-7, 103.

number of laborers for each hundred acres than did cotton farming. The result was the displacement of a great number of Negro farmers. Knowing the past limitations of the Negro farmer, banks and merchants hesitated to extend credit when there was no cotton to be had as security. With their credit gone and but dubious prospects for a crop in 1916, the planters were unable to "furnish" their Negroes until the next cropping season. Many advised them to leave the plantation and assisted them to do so. These changes could have no other effect than to create a labor surplus in the cities. Those who remained to struggle with changed conditions met with further disaster in the summer of 1916 when destructive floods swept through the lower Mississippi Valley. Thousands of Negroes would have died of starvation but for the aid given by the Federal Department of Agriculture and the Red Cross. Unemployment, depression, poverty and famine were the "Four Horsemen" who goaded the Negro into migration. Thousands needed no other inducement than the prospect of a job. Fortunately, an unusual demand for Negro labor developed in the North at this very moment.

But a considerable number of Negroes migrated from sections where there had been no weevil and no floods. Once the northern movement started, there was a good deal of discussion among the Negroes themselves. This discussion emphasized social grievances and these began to play a part in the migration.

The treatment accorded the Negro always stood second, when not first, among the reasons given by Negroes for leaving the South (wrote Dr. W. T. B. Williams). I talked with all classes of colored people from Virginia to Louisiana, farm hands, tenants, farmers, hack drivers, porters, mechanics, barbers, merchants, insurance men, teachers, heads of schools, ministers, druggists, physicians, lawyers, and in every instance the matter of treatment came to the front voluntarily. This is the all-absorbing, burning question among Negroes. For years no group of the thoughtful, intellectual class of Negroes, at any rate, have met for any purpose without finally drifting into some discussion of their treatment at the hands of white people.⁹

Down to (and including) 1922 over 430 known lynchings occurred in the state of Georgia. There were 57 in the four year period 1917-20. It is difficult to determine the exact influence of lynching on migration from Georgia because the lynchings occurred in the boll weevil section where economic conditions were also at

⁹ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 101.

their worst. But Randolph and Earl counties, where two of the worst lynchings occurred, were among the heaviest losers; while Dougherty County (also in the boll weevil section), where a lynching has never occurred, lost comparatively few Negroes.¹⁰ Governor Hugh M. Dorsey said,

Higher wages are undoubtedly enticing many away, but their feeling of insecurity for their life and property is more largely responsible for this migration than the average Georgian would admit.¹¹

Persecution by law officers was probably a greater factor in the migration than lynching. After all, there are only a few Negroes whose lives are actually endangered by mobs. But persecution by policemen is much more constant and universal. Aside from matters involving arrest and the proneness of Southern juries to convict Negroes, the colored man feels that in civil cases he does not get impartial justice when he is involved in a dispute with white men.¹² Whether this belief is true or false, it is a real factor in the discontent, and the more it is discussed the more important a factor it becomes.

The inability to educate their children properly because of inadequate school facilities is a reason which nearly all Negroes gave for leaving the South. This point was emphasized in an "Address to the Legislature of the State of Georgia" by a group of Negro citizens meeting at Atlanta, July 4, 1923. After calling attention to the fact that "four-fifths of all the public schools for Negroes in Georgia" are "still taught in churches and lodge halls, with absolutely no equipment whatever to aid the teachers in imparting the instruction they are supposed to give," they further asserted that nine-tenths of the Negro schools "are taught by teachers who have never completed as much as a first-rate eighth-grade grammar-school course, and who know nothing of the advantage of normal school training." In the whole state, it was claimed, there were less than a dozen junior high schools for Negroes and only one four year high school.¹³ A convention of representative Mississippi Negroes pointed out that white children re-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 79, 88; T. J. Woofter, Jr., *Progress in Race Relations in Georgia*, 10; *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 24, Dec. 10, 1916.

¹¹ *As to the Negro in Georgia*.

¹² T. J. Woofter, Jr., *Negro Migration*, 144; *Negro Year Book*, 1925-26, 8; *Christian Index*, June 24, 1917.

¹³ Willis J. King, *The Negro in American Life*, 100.

ceived \$20 per capita for education in that state, while the Negro child received but \$1.¹⁴

Not the least of the causes involving "treatment" is the segregation of the Negro in definite portions of a Southern city. There is a distinct difference between segregation and separation. Segregation means not only another section of the city for the Negro, but a section that is inferior: unpaved streets, no gas or electric lights, absence of water supply, no sewerage system, bad sanitary conditions, and little police protection. Likewise, segregation on railroads means not only separate but inferior accommodations.

That social causes had much to do with the migration after it got a good start is proved by the fact that those plantations and those industries which gave their Negroes satisfactory treatment and living conditions did not lose nearly as many of their laborers as did those where conditions were bad. The American Cast Iron Pipe Company of Birmingham, the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in Virginia, and the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company of St. Louis had for years given special attention to the welfare of their workers and found their labor difficulties very much minimized during the northward migration, although thousands of Negroes left the districts in which they were located.¹⁵

At the same time that boll weevil, floods and the reorganization of agriculture were displacing many Negroes, already discontented with their treatment, from their accustomed fields of labor, the demands of Northern factories for unskilled and semi-skilled laborers were increasing. The World War practically stopped foreign immigration to the United States and called to the colors of the nations engaged in that conflict hundreds of thousands of aliens residing in this country. In April, 1917, the United States entered the war and eventually four million of our young men found their way into training camps. The labor shortage thus created coincided with a tremendous expansion of industry due to an unprecedented demand for war supplies. Railroad administrations, manufacturers and mine owners turned to the South where was to be found the largest single body of unskilled laborers in the country. The Pennsylvania and Erie railroads were the first to import Negroes. Early in the summer of 1916 these rail-

¹⁴ *Negro Year Book, 1925-26*, 8.

¹⁵ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 42f, 94; Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration during the War*, 93; Willis D. Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America*, 290-1.

roads backed trains into Jacksonville, Pensacola and St. Augustine and offered to take anyone who was willing to go. The promise of a "free ride" met with instant favor, and carloads of Negroes began to pour into Pennsylvania. When they had once touched Northern soil and discovered that still higher wages were being offered elsewhere many deserted the railroads which transported them and sought employment in the steel works. Having learned a costly lesson, labor agents were sent South to operate on a selective basis.

Although the number of agents at work in the South was probably less than at one time supposed, the labor agent was a real factor in the migration. They were most active in the large cities where their presence was less easily detected. Here they told the open-mouthed Negroes tales of wonderful Harlem with its streets paved with golden opportunities—of "social equality," free schools, opportunity to vote, and beautiful theaters where Negroes were seated among the whites. A printed circular distributed by one agent enumerated the attractions of a town in southern Pennsylvania, consisting of five saloons, two dance halls and street cars without Jim Crow restrictions. On July 11, 1917, the following advertisement appeared in a Cincinnati newspaper:

1,000 Colored Men wanted to go to New York City to work for the Erie Railroad. \$2.30 per day for track workers. \$2.40 per day for freight handlers. *Transportation Absolutely Free.* Board and lodging \$4.50 per week. Ship Wednesday noon.¹⁶

The Southern Negro laborer is not an economist. He thinks in terms of money wages, not real wages. When the labor agent offered him free transportation plus a wage from two to five times higher than anything he had ever earned in his life, he might be excused for feeling excited. He did not stop to think that the cost of food, shelter and clothing might also be increased, that he would have to spend money for fuel, and to ask concerning housing conditions never entered his head. Said one

It was a rare day that did not see on the forward end of the platform on any Southern station . . . a small group of big-muscled, white toothed darkies clad in cheap store clothes or in brand new overalls, and burdened with any bundle from a well-stuffed bandana handkerchief to a canvas trunk bound about with rotten rope.¹⁷

¹⁶ Harry Snowden Stabler, "Draining the South of Labor," *Country Gentleman*, Sept. 8, 1917, 1371-2.

¹⁷ Kingsley Moses, "The Negro Comes North," *Forum*, Aug., 1917, 58: 181-901.

The Underground Railroad was operating again.

Negroes are an emotional people; they are easily swayed by the power of suggestion. Every Negro who went North and made good started a new group on the way. To a thousand colored communities below the Line went back the word of a greater racial tolerance, wages that seemed fabulous and more work at the same wages.¹⁸ Frequently they contained money to be used for the transportation of their families and friends to the North. Such letters were the best of all recruiting agents. A still stronger influence was the migrant who returned to visit his friends, dressed in fine clothes, spending what seemed to be unlimited money and telling wildly exaggerated tales of Northern "freedom." It is no wonder that neighbors caught the hysteria and joined the new gold rush.

The Negro press was an active agent in the migration. It kept all the grievances of the colored man clearly before him and pointed out the way of escape. No periodical was more significant than the *Chicago Defender*. This paper is said to have increased its circulation from 10,000 to 93,000 during the war years. Not only did it print direct appeals to come North, but it gave much space to news items tending to create the impression of a general mass movement. Its sale was forbidden in many Southern towns, but subscription copies delivered through the mails were passed from one family to another until the sheet was in tatters and the printing illegible. Hundreds of migrants in Chicago attributed their presence to the *Defender*.

In the course of time the movement was complicated by re-

¹⁸ The following letters are illustrative:

"Mike, old boy, I was promoted on the first of the month. I was made first assistant to the head carpenter. When he is out of place I take everything in charge and was raised to \$95 per month. You know I know my stuff. What's the news generally around H'burg? I should have been here twenty years ago. I just begin to feel like a man. It's a great deal of pleasure in knowing that you have got some privileges. My children are going to the same school with the whites and I don't have to humble to no one. I have registered. Will vote the next election and there isn't any yes sir and no sir. It's all yes and no, Sam and Bill."

"I often think so much of the conversation we used to have concerning this part of the world. I wish many times you could see our people up here, as they are entirely in a different light. I witnessed Decoration Day on May 30, the line of march was four miles, eight brass bands. All business houses were closed. I tell you the people here are patriotic. The chief of police dropped dead Friday. Buried him today, the procession about three miles long. People are coming here every day and find employment. Nothing here but money, and it is not hard to get. Oh, I have children in school every day with the white children."

ligious hysteria. There was a good deal of talk about "going into Canaan" and the "flight out of Egypt." Believing that God had opened this way of escape from their oppressions, going North became an expression of faith. Those who opposed the movement were bitterly attacked as "white folks' niggers." Led by their ministers, whole congregations set out for the "Promised Land," leaving their crops unharvested and sacrificing livestock and other property for what it would bring. The migration had its martyrs, too. Tuberculosis, pneumonia and the flu have slain their thousands, but did not check the movement.

One of the peculiar things about the migration was its indirect character. Plantation Negroes did not think it safe to engage through transportation to the North. They moved to the nearest village; from there to the larger city. Here they might meet labor agents who would send them North. Thus New Orleans, Birmingham, Jacksonville, Savannah and Memphis became the chief ports of debarkation for the new Southern "export." Between August, 1916, and June, 1917, over 12,000 tickets were purchased from Selma, Alabama, to Birmingham.¹⁹ The "boll weevil" Negroes had drifted into Selma in search of work. Not finding it, they traveled to Birmingham, the "Pittsburgh of the South," to fill the vacuum created by the migration of Negroes from that section. Selma's "boll weevil" Negroes would probably stay in Birmingham just long enough to acquire sufficient skill to pose as miners or industrial workers. Then they would move northward into the coal fields, the railroad yards, or the steel mills. Thus the movement was not only a movement from South to North; it was a movement from Southern rural to Southern urban areas. As the demand for labor increased, fewer of the passengers would stop at Birmingham; they would move directly to their Northern destination. For the most part, the migration followed straight lines and established routes. Those from the Atlantic Coast states took a train for Philadelphia or went by boat to New York or Boston. The Illinois Central Railroad runs directly from New Orleans through Mississippi and Tennessee to Chicago, thus furnishing easy transportation for migrants from Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Tennessee. Migrants from the South Central states poured into Cincinnati or St. Louis which were re-routing points for stations farther north.

In its earliest stages the migration excited little notice from

¹⁹ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 53, 56.

the authorities. It was assumed that it was merely an expression of the Negro's "love of travel" and that they would soon return. But when the exodus became general and it was realized that the plantations were being drained of labor the South was in a panic. Under date of April 23, 1923, the Department of Agriculture sent out a release stating that 32,000 Negro farm hands had left Georgia within the preceding twelve months; that 15,000 had left Arkansas and 22,750 had gone from South Carolina in the preceding seven months.²⁰ Careful surveys of states or parts of states were even more startling. Reports to the Georgia Bankers' Association indicated a loss of 228,938 Negroes in that state during the years 1920, 1921, 1922, and the first half of 1923. The Association feared a loss of wealth to the state of \$27,000,000 for the year 1923.²¹ The South Carolina College of Agriculture came to the conclusion that South Carolina had lost about 50,000 Negroes during the six months following November, 1922. For a time the agricultural program of certain sections of the South was completely upset. Thousands of acres of cotton, rice and sugar went to waste. Strawberries rotted in the fields for want of pickers. The State Highway Commission of North Carolina was compelled to discontinue work on more than fifty highway construction projects.²² Industry also suffered. The head of a large Alabama steel works said:

The different Southern industrial works, mines, etc., are experiencing difficulty in operating without the Negroes who have gone North. Some of them are working shorter time in consequence—some have closed down so as to concentrate the available labor on fewer points and thus lessen the overhead.²³

A bulletin of the Southern Metal Trades Association declared:

The Negro belongs to the South, and he should stay there for his interest and for the interest of the country at large. Shut the barn door before the horses all get out. Help us to stop further depredations on the supply of labor remaining in the South. We have none to spare.²⁴

Shortage of labor forced an advance of wages of from 10 to 25 per cent.²⁵

²⁰ "Negro Migration," *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1923, 16:1186-7.

²¹ *American Bankers Association Journal*, July, 1923, 16:51.

²² "Negro Migration," *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit.

²³ A. J. Hain, "Our Immigrant, the Negro," *Iron Trade Review*, Sept. 13, 1923, 730-6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 70-4.

Practically every Southern state required prohibitive licenses for agents soliciting labor. In Mississippi the fee was \$1,000; in Georgia and Alabama \$500; and to this counties and city councils added other licenses. But laws aimed at the suppression of labor agents did not stop the migration. Indeed, only one agent in Georgia paid the state license. Agents arrested at Americus, Cuthbert, Thomasville and Sylvester were given heavy fines and chain gang sentences.²⁶ Not infrequently force was used. Wholesale arrests of Negro "vagrants" occurred at the railroad stations at Savannah, Tampa and other cities.²⁷ At Macon, Georgia, the police forcibly dispersed a thousand Negroes who were awaiting the arrival of a Chicago train.²⁸ At other places colored people about to board northbound trains had their tickets snatched from their hands.²⁹ In a number of instances ticket sellers refused to sell Negroes tickets for northern destinations.³⁰

Propaganda supplemented force. This was carried on chiefly through the white newspapers and consisted of news items emphasizing unexpected hardships which Negroes were meeting in the North and their desire to return South. High costs of living, it was said, reduced the much vaunted wages to a myth. As soon as wartime conditions had passed, the Negro would be discharged by his Northern employers or driven out by organized labor. On a single day of 1919, 17,000 Negroes were said to have been in the bread lines of Chicago. The rigors of the Northern winters were played up. On the authority of Rev. Mr. Parks, 2,000 Negroes were said to be sick in Philadelphia. Northern coffin makers were working day and night to take care of the Negroes who died in the terrible Northern winters.³¹ The race riots of 1919 gave ample opportunity to show that the North was not free from race prejudice. Several Southern organizations sent agents northward to stimulate a return movement with offers of free transportation. Such efforts centered in Chicago but were far from successful. According to T. Arnold Hill, secretary of the Chicago Urban League, in the week following the riot in that city 261 Negroes ar-

²⁶ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 86.

²⁷ Monroe N. Work, "The Negro Migration," *Southern Workman*, May, 1924, 53:202-12; Herbert W. Horwill, "A Negro Exodus," *Contemporary Review*, Sept., 1918, 114:299-305; Scott, *op. cit.*, 75.

²⁸ Junius B. Wood, *The Negro in Chicago*, 9.

²⁹ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 110; Martha Bensley Bruere, "The Black Folk are coming on," *Survey*, July 15, 1923, 50:432-5.

³⁰ King, *op. cit.*, 102; Scott, *op. cit.*, 78.

³¹ Washington Post, Sept. 14, 1919; *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, July 14, 1923; New York Tribune, July 8, 1923.

rived and 219 departed. Of the latter, only 83 gave a Southern state as their destination.³² Perhaps the published statements of certain Southern political leaders made them doubtful of their future in the South. In answer to a telegram from the Chicago *Herald-Examiner*, Thomas W. Bickett, Governor of North Carolina, said in part:

The farms, the lumber camps, and the companies engaged in building public highways in North Carolina can easily absorb 25,000 Negroes who may desire to come to this state for the purpose of securing honorable employment at remunerative wages. But if, during their residence in Chicago, any of these Negroes have become tainted or intoxicated with dreams of social equality or of political domination, it would be well for them to remain where they are, for in the South such things are forever impossible.³³

Governor Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi was even more adamant in his position.

Your telegram asking how many Negroes Mississippi can absorb received. In reply I desire to state that we have all the room in the world for what we know as "n-i-g-g-e-r-s," but none whatever for "colored ladies and gentlemen." If these Negroes have been contaminated with Northern social and political dreams of equality, we cannot use them, nor do we want them. The Negro who understands his proper relation to the white man in this country will be gladly received by the people of Mississippi, as we are very much in need of labor.³⁴

The migration had several important results. First, it has been a benefit to the South, particularly to Southern agriculture. Although the loss of labor was a serious inconvenience at the time, the ultimate effect of the boll weevil and labor shortage has been to emancipate the Southern farmer from cotton slavery by compelling him to diversify his crops. Second, it was a temporary benefit to the Negro. Everywhere in the South the migration was followed by an advance in wages. Furthermore, fear of losing still more labor caused the officials in Southern cities to pay more attention to the needs of the Negro. Darkened streets have been paved and lighted; water, gas and sewerage systems have been extended into the Negro quarter; parks and playgrounds have been

³² T. Arnold Hill, "Why Southern Negroes don't go South," *Survey*, Nov. 29, 1919, 43:183-5.

³³ *Public Letters and Papers of Thomas Walter Bickett, Governor of North Carolina, 1917-1921*. Compiled by Sanford Martin, private secretary to the Governor. Edited by R. B. House, Archivist.

³⁴ *The Crisis*, Jan., 1920, quoting Chicago *Herald-Examiner*.

provided in some cities. But the changed attitude did not extend beyond the period of labor shortage. With the depression of 1929 wages dropped to new low levels. The migrant, too, was benefited; for with higher wages came, temporarily at least, a sense of freedom from frustration. Third, we must consider the effects of the migration on the North. When nearly a million Negroes dumped themselves into the Northern industrial cities, a housing problem of serious import arose. In the days of slavery the master who did not provide proper accommodations for his chattels lost money by it. But few Northern industries made any preparation for housing their imported laborers. Many of the migrants brought by the railroads were housed in camps. Some of these were constructed of wood covered with tar paper and furnished with cots, heat, toilet and wash room facilities. Others were simply rows of box cars, tents or old two-story houses hastily converted into dormitories. Some of the camps were well kept; others had no adequate sanitary provisions, and the sleeping quarters were filthy, lacking in ventilation and seriously congested.³⁵ In the majority of cases not even this provision was made for Negro workers. Congestion brought the natural results of increased health hazards and higher crime rates and, at the same time, created new interracial suspicions. The end of that is not yet.

³⁵ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 145, 148; J. L. Sewall, "Industrial Revolution and the Negro," *Scribner's Mag.*, Mar., 1921, 69:334-42.

CHAPTER IV

SMOKETOWN

Migration to the city was followed by segregation within the city. It is a mistaken notion that Negroes prefer to live among white people. The Negro is naturally gregarious and, like the European immigrant, prefers to live among his own kind. This tendency has produced Harlem in New York, the South Side in Chicago, the Seventh Ward in Philadelphia, the Hill District in Pittsburgh, St. Antoine Street in Detroit, Central Avenue in Cleveland, the Northwest neighborhood in Washington, Druid Hill in Baltimore, the West End and Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, and other Negro ghettos. Sometimes the quarter is located along the railroad track. Or it may be along the bank of a dirty and ill-smelling stream. One may usually recognize it by the dark alleys, junk yards, second-hand stores, fish markets and pawn shops. Almost without exception, it is the most congested and neglected portion of the city.

Poor lighting, an absence of sewerage, and inadequate water supply are apt to characterize the Negro area. The narrow streets are likely to be unpaved. Probably there are no sidewalks. In bad weather the road may be next to impassable on account of the mud. The streets may be full of refuse.¹ There is rarely proper garbage collection. Police and fire protection are almost certain to be poor or absent. In most cities Negroes do not have sufficient political power to command municipal improvements. In some localities the red light districts are located within or border on the Black Belt. This was true of East St. Louis prior to the race riot in 1919. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations found

the borderland of a colored residential district is the haven for disorderly resorts. Protests of colored residents against the painted women in their neighborhood and the loud profanity and vulgarity are usually ignored by the police.²

¹ The Social Service Department of Flint-Goodrich Hospital and Tulane University, speaking of deep ruts in the streets of the Negro quarter in New Orleans, says: "The city street department seeks to remedy this by dumping on the road trash, garbage, and tin cans. The trash is often stacked three or four feet deep, and although it is supposed to have been put through incinerators, unburned garbage and dead animals are often found." Carlton Beals and Abel Plum, "Louisiana's Black Utopia," *Nation*, Oct. 30, 1935, 141: 503-5.

² *The Negro in Chicago*, 202.

Almost any Negro district is infested with blind tigers, patronized by whites as well as by Negroes. They are wide open and will not be molested as long as they pay protection money. Gambling joints run day and night. Amid such surroundings the city Negro and his children live.

President Hoover's Committee on Negro Housing, appointed in 1931, found less than fifty per cent of the buildings occupied by Negroes meeting modern standards.³ Professor William Henry Jones, describing the alley housing at Washington, states "These houses furnish more than twice their quota of cases of rickets, tuberculosis, illegitimacy, and criminality."⁴ Yet between 10,000 and 12,000 people live in the alleys of the nation's capital. A recent survey of Philadelphia finds more than 2,200 Negro dwellings over one hundred years old; the median age is 53.7 years. Less than one-third the structures housing Negroes in this city were reported "good." Over one-half needed repairs, and a large percentage were rated as unsuitable for occupancy.⁵ In Baltimore, 64.2 per cent of the Negro houses were reported as "bad."⁶ In Harlem, 22 per cent of the buildings were found to be below minimum tenement regulation requirements.⁷ The health authorities at Newark, New Jersey, spoke of the majority of Negro houses in that city as "unfit for human habitations Considered simply from the health viewpoint, they could not be razed too quickly."⁸ Investigators at Buffalo and Cleveland used similar terms.⁹ Most of the houses occupied by Negroes are very old. They are unpainted, sagging houses with decayed foundations and leaky roofs. The doors swing unsteadily from broken hinges; the broken windows are stuffed with rags. Inside one finds the wall paper hanging down, the plaster loose and fallen from the naked lath, the floor rotten, and the small low-ceilinged rooms full of musty odors.

The failure of the city to extend the sewer lines often makes

³ *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1931, 23:7.

⁴ *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D. C.*, 25.

⁵ Colored Housing in Philadelphia. Philadelphia Real Property Survey. W.P.A. project 4744, bulletin 37.

⁶ Ira De A. Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore*, 17.

⁷ *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1937, 11:1.

⁸ George Edmund Haynes, "Negroes Move North," *Survey*, Jan. 4, 1919, 41:455-61.

⁹ Haynes, "Negro Migration," *Opportunity*, Oct., 1924, 2:304; "Negro Migration, Its Effect on Family and Community Life in the North," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1924, 62:75; Sadie Tanner Mossell, "Standards of Living among One Hundred Migrant Families of Philadelphia," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1921, 98:208.

compliance with the sanitary regulations an impossibility. Waste water is frequently dumped on the ground in the rear of the house. "Bathrooms are often missing."¹⁰ In fourteen cities surveyed by Dr. Woofter, only 53 per cent of the houses had bathtubs.¹¹ At Fort Wayne, Indiana, 74 per cent of the Negro dwellings were without bathtubs, and 19 per cent without toilets.¹² Less than half the renting families in Richmond and Birmingham have inside flush toilets,¹³ and these cities are typical.¹⁴ Where inside toilets are not provided, a privy is located in the back yard. Only seven years ago the writer counted a group of sixteen privies in the Negro quarter of a densely populated Northern city. They covered, perhaps, a quarter of an acre and were completely surrounded by two and three-story dwellings. At Tampa, Florida, three thousand Negroes were using privies, 50 per cent of which were shared by two or more families.¹⁵ In Philadelphia, the Department of Health found forty-eight privies shared by 166 families.¹⁶ After the Harlem riot (1935) surveys disclosed tenements whose squalor was unbelievable and basic sanitary facilities were unknown.¹⁷

Frequently the houses have no inside water connections. "Nearly half the houses (in Kansas City) are without water."¹⁸ In Richmond and Birmingham, one-fourth and one-third of the Negro houses, respectively, were without running water.¹⁹ Sometimes the water supply is secured from a hydrant back of the house which, naturally enough, is frozen during a good part of the winter. More often water for drinking is secured from a well located in the back yard not far from the privy and wastewater dump. The city bacteriologist at Lynchburg, Virginia, tested water from 401 wells and found 219 "bad."

¹⁰ *The Negro in Chicago*, 152.

¹¹ T. J. Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 117.

¹² National Urban League, A Survey of the Negro Population of Fort Wayne, Indiana, Ms.

¹³ *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1937, 44:1060-9.

¹⁴ Henderson H. Donald, "The Negro Migration of 1916-18," *Journal of Negro History*, Oct., 1921, 6:456; T. J. Woofter, *The Negroes of Athens, Ga.; Colored Housing in Philadelphia*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Jesse O. Thomas, "Effect of Changing Economic Conditions upon the Living Standards of Negroes," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1928, 455-66.

¹⁶ T. J. Woofter, "The Negro Migration to Cities," *Survey*, Feb. 15, 1923, 51:647-9.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, May 19, 1935, VII, 14.

¹⁸ A. E. Martin, *Our Negro Population*, 93, 96.

¹⁹ *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1937, 44:1060-9.

In the case of the springs the situation proved even worse. Only two families were found to be using water from a spring that showed evidences of care and attention, while 189 families were using water from springs which seemed to the investigator to be altogether dangerous to health. In three instances springs were found to be situated so that the water and drainage from at least a dozen houses ran directly into the spring. In each of these cases human excrement, refuse, etc., were seen in the yards immediately above the spring.²⁰

To lack of proper sanitation, add a few dark, damp rooms in which a race not accustomed to urban life is packed at night; and it is clear why the Negro section has a higher mortality, especially among children.²¹ Here disease and death are rivals, and these unfortunates are the favored victims whenever an epidemic visits a city.

Other elementary necessities are often lacking. In a city like Chicago we hear,

Heating is commonly done by wood or coal stoves, and furnaces are rather exceptional; when furnaces are present, they are sometimes out of commission.²²

In Brooklyn, New York, there are tenements with no fire escapes.²³ Eighty-five per cent of the dwellings surveyed in Cincinnati were fire-traps.²⁴

Negroes do not dwell amid such surroundings because they are satisfied with them or because they have no ambition for better things. But it must be remembered that a man's earning power has much to do with the surroundings in which he lives. Comprising the greater part of the low-income group, the Negro cannot be fastidious about his home. He must take what is offered at prices that he can afford to pay.

For these surroundings the Negro pays rentals considerably higher in amount than are paid by white families for quarters of

²⁰ Benjamin Guy Childs, *The Negroes of Lynchburg, Va.*, 43-5.

²¹ In Harlem, 1929-33, the infant mortality rate ranged from 94 to 120 per thousand live births, as against 55 for New York City in 1931. During the same period Harlem's death rate from tuberculosis was from 251 to 319 per hundred thousand population. The rate for the United States in 1930 was 64.6 per thousand. A survey of the board of health in Richmond County, Georgia, showed a death rate from tuberculosis among Negroes of 151 per hundred thousand. Another board of health survey at Memphis, Tennessee, revealed a direct relation between typhoid fever rates and the percentage of families without private toilets.

²² *Negro in Chicago*, 152; Helen B. Pendleton, "Cotton Pickers in Northern Cities," *Survey*, Feb. 17, 1917, 37:569-71.

²³ Thomas, *op. cit.*

²⁴ J. H. Robinson, "Cincinnati Survey and Program," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1919, 526.

the same kind. President Hoover's Committee on Negro Housing computed the average rental a room for low-income groups in New York at \$6.67, whereas the average price a room paid by Negroes of the same wage scale was \$9.58.²⁵ The Chicago Commission on Race Relations declared,

All investigations of Negro housing on the South Side indicate that as a rule the rents are excessive, considering the inferior dwellings, their disrepair and unsanitary conditions.²⁶

Another Chicago study developed the fact that

In 1937 94 per cent of the dwellings in Chicago renting for \$20 a month or less were in a state of delapidation, badly overcrowded, and lacked bath rooms and inside toilets. More than 80 per cent of the colored families of that city spent 20 per cent or more of the earnings of the chief wage earner for rent, while among white families only 30 per cent paid that large proportion.²⁷

In Harlem it was found that many families pay 40 per cent of their income for rent. More than half the population of Harlem lives in apartments costing between \$40 and \$100 a month. Elsewhere in New York similar apartments rent between \$30 and \$50.²⁸ These conditions are typical, as will be found by reading the surveys of almost any city.

High rents mean that it is necessary to economize on space. "Bunching up" is inevitable. In eleven tenements, selected as typical by the Division of Housing of the Health Department of Philadelphia, 175 families were found living in 354 rooms, an average of two rooms a family. Forty-one families lived in one room, 75 in two, 45 in three, and 7 in four.²⁹ In Epstein's study of the Pittsburgh Negro, less than 3 per cent of the families were found living in individual houses. Thirty-five per cent dwelt in tenements, 50 per cent in rooms; the remainder in camps and shacks. Of the 157 families investigated, 77 or 49 per cent lived in one room each, 33 or 21 per cent lived in

²⁵ *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1931, 23:7. Cf. Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 126-7; Winthrop D. Lane, "Ambushed in the City," *Survey*, Mar. 1, 1925, 53:693; T. J. Woofter, *Negro Housing in Philadelphia*, 22.

²⁶ *The Negro in Chicago*, 203.

²⁷ Leila Houteling, *Income and Standards of Living of Unskilled Laborers in Chicago*, 112.

²⁸ *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1935, IV, 11:1; Mar. 21, 1935, 17:2; Apr. 7, 1935, 6:2; Oct. 13, 1937, 11:1; Nov. 28, 1941, 10:4; Cary Batchelor, *What the Tenant Family Has and What it Pays for it*; Report of Temporary Commission on the Condition of Urban Colored Population in New York State, *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1938, 46:1376-80.

²⁹ *Negro Housing in Philadelphia*, 17.

two-room apartments, and only 47 families or 30 per cent lived in apartments of three or more rooms.³⁰ An investigation by the Negro Welfare Committee of Newark, New Jersey, revealed 53 families living in houses which averaged 4 2/7 persons to the room.³¹

The surveys of Chicago, New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Gary show that, in order to pay the high rents, from one-fourth to one-half of the Negro families studied took lodgers.³² Sometimes beds were rented on a double-shift basis.³³ Epstein discovered that

only 22 out of more than 200 (men) had individual rooms, and 25 per cent lived in rooms used by more than four people. Thirty-seven per cent of them slept in separate beds, 50 per cent slept two in a bed, and 13 per cent slept three or more in a bed.³⁴

In Philadelphia twenty men slept on the floor in one room measuring 16 x 20 feet, each paying the proprietor \$1.50 a week.³⁵ The practice of taking lodgers is always dangerous to family life, particularly so in the case of colored families because they so often live near the vice district. It is seldom possible to investigate the character of these lodgers, and there can be no family privacy under the system. When a family which includes grown daughters and men boarders must live and sleep in two small rooms, we need not be surprised to find promiscuity, venereal diseases and children without benefit of clergy. "Rent parties" cause further demoralization. In order to meet the demands of the landlord, the home is thrown open to paying visitors. There is dancing. Cheap whisky is sold. One vice leads to another. It is common knowledge that a vast deal of prostitution grows out of "rent parties."

Like whites, Negroes develop a higher standard of living as their income increases. It is natural that Negro business and pro-

³⁰ Abraham Epstein, *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*, 11, 12, 15.

³¹ Pendleton, *op. cit.*

³² Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. v, 5-6, 8-10; Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 86-8; Pennsylvania Dept. of Welfare, *Negro Survey of Pennsylvania*, 39; New York Urban League, *2,400 Negro Families in Harlem*; Elizabeth Hughes, *Living Conditions for Small Wage Earners in Chicago*; Ira De A. Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore*, 15.

³³ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1917-18*, 148; "Exploitation that is getting dangerous," *Outlook*, Oct., 1919, 5:14; *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1941, 1:3.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, 12.

³⁵ Mossell, *op. cit.*, 175.

fessional men whose earning power makes it possible should seek better quarters. Such quarters are to be found only by invading the residential blocks of the whites. Because of a belief in the undesirability of Negro neighbors, such a movement usually meets with opposition. Sometimes it takes the form of tenant leagues or property owners' associations whose members enter into covenants not to sell or rent to Negroes.³⁶ Sometimes segregation ordinances adopted by city councils prohibit Negroes from living in blocks designated as "white." Baltimore, Dallas, Asheville, Richmond, St. Louis and Louisville passed such ordinances within the space of twelve months. Occasionally there is resort to violence. From July 1, 1917, to March 1, 1921, there were fifty-eight racial bombings in Chicago. Jesse Binga, president of the Binga Bank, had his home on South Park Avenue bombed six times.³⁷ In Detroit, a mob attacked the newly purchased home of Dr. O. H. Sweet, a colored physician, who had just returned from several years' study in Vienna. In the melee some shots were fired, and eventually the Negroes were put on trial for murder.³⁸ Riots took place in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Scranton, Kalamazoo, Logansport, Indiana, Seattle, and Castleton, Staten Island.³⁹ Eventually the Negroes usually win out and the whites abandon the contested block, sacrificing their property for what it will bring. This was the manner in which Harlem was made. But though property falls in value during the transition from white to black, it has a tendency to rise immediately afterward. An increase in rentals is usually the sequel of turning houses in white residential sections over to Negro occupancy.⁴⁰ Black as well as white agents play at this game.

³⁶ *Crisis*, 1:6-7, 2:98; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Jan. 26, July 28, 1918; *Negro in Chicago*, 118-22; Jones, *op. cit.*, 67-8, 70-2; *Negro Year Book*, 1931-2, 64, 67-8; *New York Times*, June 8, 1937, 25:5. On Nov. 12, 1940, in the case *Hansberry vs. Lee*, the United States Supreme Court unanimously refused to enforce a restrictive covenant in Chicago. *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 1940, 18:5; *Crisis*, Dec., 1940, 390; *Nation*, Nov. 23, 1940, 151:495-6.

³⁷ *Negro in Chicago*, 122, 125-6. Cf. *New York Times*, May 31, 1937, 6:5.

³⁸ David E. Lilienthal, "A Trial of Two Races," *Outlook*, Dec. 25, 1925, 141:629-30; "Has the Negro the right of self-defense?" *Nation*, Dec. 23, 1925, 121:724-5.

³⁹ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 29, 1918; Walter White, "Negro Segregation comes North," *Nation*, Oct. 21, 1925, 121:458-60; *Crisis*, 3:161-2; Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 204.

⁴⁰ In New York City, Negro rentals increased nearly 100 per cent, from \$21.66 to \$41.77, in one area between 1919 and 1927, while the average rentals increased only 10 per cent. In some districts of Chicago they doubled between 1919 and 1931. *Negro Housing*. Report on the Committee on Negro Housing of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, pp. 14, 16.

Contrary to general belief, there are Negroes who possess considerable property in the form of real estate, bank accounts and securities of high grade.

James H. Robinson of the Negro Civic Welfare Committee of the Council of Social Agencies reported in 1919 that Cincinnati Negroes owned approximately 1,100 homes valued at \$3,250,000.⁴¹

The Chicago Commission on Race Relations found that Negroes had \$1,500,000 on deposit at one Chicago bank, \$1,000,000 in a second, and considerable sums in other depositories.⁴² In general the Negro is handicapped in buying a home because of

the low security rating given by real estate loan concerns to property tenanted by Negroes. Because of this, Negroes are charged more than white people for loans, find it more difficult to secure them, and thus are greatly handicapped in efforts to buy or improve property.⁴³

It is charged that the F.H.A. has discriminated against Negroes who are attempting to purchase their own homes through Federal mortgages.⁴⁴ The development of their own building and loan associations has greatly aided home ownership among the race.

The social and intellectual standards of Negroes of the well-to-do class are similar to those of white people of the same group. Their homes are of good quality and furnished in good taste. They are lighted by electricity and heated by furnaces with hot air or hot water systems. One finds pictures, good books and periodicals. The mistresses of such homes can converse intelligently and pleasantly. If there are children the parents plan to send them to college.

One result of the movement toward the city is the development of a group community. The Negro area is virtually a city within a city. It has its own real estate and insurance offices, its hotels, schools, churches, theaters, motion picture houses, newspapers and stores. Most of the latter are small business enterprises: pawn shops, barber shops, beauty parlors, pool rooms, restaurants, drug stores, news stands, groceries, meat markets, haberdasheries, and tailor shops. Negro physicians, lawyers, dentists, ministers and undertakers have been increasing as a consequence

⁴¹ C. S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 221.

⁴² *Negro in Chicago*, 227-8. Cf. Epstein, 24; *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. 4.

⁴³ *Negro in Chicago*, 215. Cf. Report of Temporary Commission on the Condition of Urban Colored Population in New York State, *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1938, 46:1376-80.

⁴⁴ *Crisis*, Feb., Oct., 1939, 54, 305; *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 1936, 6:2.

of the larger field for their services. Not even the vices of modern life are lacking. They have their own gambling dens, cabarets, dance halls and houses of prostitution.

The recreational facilities in Negro neighborhoods constitute as definite a group of problems as those of housing. Wholesome amusement is an essential in modern life, but the Negro encounters definite obstacles in securing recreation. Early in 1928, Mr. Forrester B. Washington sent a questionnaire to forty Northern and seventeen Southern cities inquiring into the provision for leisure time activities of Negroes. In all of the Southern cities segregation or exclusion was practiced in connection with the Negro and commercialized amusement. Three of these cities had separate moving picture theaters; in ten Negroes were segregated in a definite portion of the building; and the remaining four made no provision at all for them. A similar situation prevailed in the combination moving picture and vaudeville houses. Three cities did not admit Negroes to legitimate theaters; eleven admitted them to the balcony. Twelve of these cities had amusement parks. Two did not admit Negroes at all, and at Eufaula, Alabama, there was a sign at the entrance—"Negroes and dogs not allowed." None of the Southern cities admitted Negroes and whites to the park at the same time. Lakewood Park, Atlanta, had one "nigger day" each year. At Hot Springs, Arkansas, Negroes and whites were admitted to the park on alternate days. At Memphis, Dallas and Fort Worth, Negroes were admitted on certain days. In some cities small sections of white playgrounds were set apart for Negroes, but they were not well equipped with play apparatus, and the arrangement was not satisfactory. Three cities had bathing beaches for whites only, and ten had swimming pools for whites only. Two of these cities had no Negro Y.M.C.A.'s, fourteen no Boy Scouts, fifteen no Camp Fire Girls, and twelve no summer camps to which Negroes were admitted. One-half of those having recreation centers had none for Negroes. In at least two-thirds of the Northern cities segregation was practiced in some form. Thirty-three cities practiced segregation in moving picture theaters, twenty-four in picture-vaudeville houses, twenty-six in legitimate theaters, and twenty-two in commercial amusement parks. Twenty-two segregated Negroes in separate Y.M.C.A.'s, fourteen in separate Boy Scout troops, eighteen in separate Camp Fire Girls, and thirteen in special summer camps. All of them practiced some segregation in connection with bathing beaches, and

all but three in public swimming pools. In six there was opposition to the use of public golf courses by Negroes. In only five were Negroes admitted to socal settlement centers.⁴⁵

In contrast with the lack of means of wholesome recreation in Northern and Southern cities, there are abundant opportunities for unwholesome enjoyment. There are the speakeasy, the pool room, the dance hall, and the gambling dive. Here the colored youth comes in contact with vicious characters and the first step in demoralization is taken. It is no accident that juvenile delinquency is more prevalent among Negro children than among white.

There are two factors which combine to prevent the city Negro from attaining a decent standard of living: (1) Ignorance resulting in unwise spending, and (2) race prejudice which makes it impossible for him to secure many articles requisite to a decent standard of living. As to the first factor, Negroes seem to feel that by purchasing in small quantities and on credit they make their money go further. Doctor Mossell found that 81 per cent of the Philadelphia Negroes included in her study bought food in small quantities and on a credit basis, although some of them could have paid cash. Coal was usually purchased by the bucket and kerosene by the quart.⁴⁶ A furniture dealer in Richmond, who does a great deal of business among Negroes, reports that 99 per cent of his sales are made on the installment plan. Less than 10 per cent of the purchasers adhere strictly to the contract but make the payments after a little prodding.⁴⁷ Most urban Negroes have insurance, but the type of policies they carry are expensive and ill-adapted to the purpose of protecting the insured. Better policies could have been obtained, but the holders are usually ignorant of this fact.⁴⁸

Then there are a thousand foolish ways in which the Negro can be induced to part with his money. Not only will Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener give him a fair complexion and Kinkout change the prevailing quality of his hair, but there are a host of podopractionists, monopractionists and other fake practitioners of medical science who, for a consideration, will make him look like a white. There are Egyptian seers and Indian fortune tellers who will reveal the future; there are dream books which he will need to buy; there

⁴⁵ Forrester B. Washington, "Recreational Facilities for the Negro," *Annals of Amer. Acad.*, Nov., 1928, 140:273-81.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, 204-5.

⁴⁷ Charles Louis Knight, *Negro Housing in Certain Virginia Cities*, 120.

⁴⁸ Mossell, *op. cit.*, 217.

are drug stores which sell love potions. Then there are the "numbers," a gambling device at which he may bet any sum—it may be only a few pennies—at odds of 1,000 to one. The numbers on which they bet are secured from automobile licenses, price tags, street addresses and telephone numbers, the hymns they sing at church and baseball scores. The only one who gets rich is the banker—he can't lose. Of course, the whole thing is outside the law; still a dozen "policy" rings are operating. Police raids only change their headquarters for a time.

Race prejudice plays its part in preventing the Negro from achieving a decent standard of living. Because of social opposition, Negroes cannot live where they will; and a scarcity of houses, artificially created, raises rents beyond reasonable levels. Often real estate dealers will neither sell nor rent new and modern houses to Negroes. Recreation appears seldom in the budget, for the Negro is admitted to few places where it is offered. Under such conditions,

money income has a depreciated significance in relation to the character of the standard of living maintained by a Negro family.⁴⁹

The sequel to the conditions which exist in our Negro quarter is a constantly increasing load on our penal institutions. It is inevitable that it should be so. A slum environment can hardly fail to create slum characters, and if we insist that the Negro must live in the slums we must be prepared for a higher crime rate. If we neglect the sanitation of his section we cannot hope to escape the plague that will result. If we refuse to educate him we cannot expect him to be a shining example of good citizenship. If we refuse to give him legitimate opportunities for recreation, we cannot blame him for finding his own by way of the blind tiger, the crap shooting den and the house of ill fame. As a taxpayer, it would seem that the Negro is entitled to paving, sewerage, electricity, city water, fire and police protection and other municipal services such as white citizens have. Certainly it would be wise to invoke the building code to prevent needless fire hazards and over-crowding, and to open parks and playgrounds more liberally for his use in leisure hours.

One of the most constructive features of the "New Deal" program was the appropriation of funds for slum clearance and rebuilding with modern low-cost apartments. It was unavoidable

⁴⁹ Mossel, *op. cit.*, 217.

that this program should meet the problem of Negro residence areas. The first project for which ground was broken was a Negro project at Atlanta. Thirty-five per cent of the program of the P.W.A. Housing Division in 1934 was concerned with the Negro projects, and these provided decent housing for 7,478 Negro families.⁵⁰ The slum clearance program inaugurated by the United States Housing Act of 1937 provided a four-year program under which approximately 52,000 units in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Washington, New Orleans, Nashville, and other cities are or will be occupied by Negro tenants.⁵¹ The LaGuardia administration lost no time in improving conditions in Harlem, largely through the aid of federal subsidies. Harlem hospital, whose 325 beds had long served a population of over 200,000, was reconditioned and its bed capacity approximately doubled. In addition, a \$240,000 health clinic was erected with P.W.A. funds. The school budget for 1937 contained items for two new buildings in Harlem, to be erected at a cost of \$1,500,000 each. On June 20, 1936, the new Harlem River Housing project was dedicated. This project furnishes model housing for 574 low income families and provides a nursery school, community playground and health facilities.⁵² Municipal services, such as police and fire protection, paving, and garbage removal are being extended into these projects. But the slum clearance program requires the elimination of one substandard dwelling for each one erected; consequently it has been of little value to the Negro in directly expanding housing facilities. Occasionally the new Negro projects have stimulated racial antagonism. When several hundred Negroes were ordered to move out of substandard buildings at Dallas, Texas, in order to begin work on a \$300,000 housing project, the Negro quarter, already overcrowded, was unable to absorb them. They turned to nearby white areas in search of homes and trouble started.⁵³ There was rioting in Detroit when Negroes attempted to move into the Sojourner Truth Settlement, a 200-unit \$1,000,000 defense housing project for Negroes constructed outside the traditional Negro area.⁵⁴

The outbreak of war caused a shift of emphasis from slum clear-

⁵⁰ Robert C. Weaver, "Negroes Need Housing," *Crisis*, May 1940, 138.

⁵¹ *Crisis*, July 1939, 210; Feb. 1940, 37; Feb. 1941, 50; *Opportunity*, Sept. 1939, 278.

⁵² *New York Times*, June 25, 1936, 23:4; Alaine Locke, "Harlem: Dark Weather-Vane," *Survey Graphic*, Aug. 1936, 25:457-62.

⁵³ *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1940, iv, 6:6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Mar. 1, 1942, 40:1; Mar. 2, 1942, 12:3; Mar. 3, 1942, 8:3.

ance to housing for war workers. As of March 20, 1942, the Federal Works Agency had been allocated 178,000 housing units to be developed for war workers. Only 5,149 (3%) of these were specifically assigned to Negro occupancy. Since Negroes are the last group to be absorbed from the surplus labor market, they were not the first to be drawn into war work. The situation at Buffalo is typical of a problem that has vexed many cities. The Bethlehem Steel mills imported Negroes for war work, only to discover that there were no places for them to live. In July, 1941, federal authorities decided to build a 200-unit housing project for Negro workers. Since demolition of slum dwellings would delay work, it was decided to build on vacant land outside the slum area. One site after another was selected and abandoned because of organized white pressure.⁵⁵ At last the federal housing authorities have given in. The present plan, strictly contradicting sound general policy, calls for the demolition of a slum area. Meantime the imported workers are still living under conditions that the Bethlehem Corporation considered impossible a year and a half ago.

According to present trends, it is apparent that the defense housing program is effecting a radical decrease in the degree to which Negroes are accommodated by public housing developments. It is to be hoped that the check in progress is temporary. The President of the United States said,

Adequate housing is a morale builder and is essential to the speed and efficiency of our national defense work. With the scarcity of building materials we can now afford to build homes only in defense areas. But the goal of a slumless America must be preserved.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The Negro's War, *Fortune*, June, 1942.

⁵⁶ Letter to National Public Housing Conference, Feb. 6, 1942.

CHAPTER V

THE WAGE EARNER: MIGRATION AND PROSPERITY

In the days of slavery there were many Negro artisans and tradesmen. They were carpenters, bricklayers, masons, shoemakers, plasterers, painters, cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, machinists and textile workers. Seventy-five years of freedom have witnessed a decline in the Negro's standing as a skilled worker, despite the fact that thousands of colored men have been trained in trade schools. During the '70s and '80s the South was undergoing a process of industrialization, and large numbers of white workers entered the cotton mills and other workshops. It was assumed that factory work and skilled labor was for the white man; that unskilled labor was for the Negro. By common consent, white workers refused to work at the same tasks with Negroes, and white capitalists refused to employ them except as unskilled laborers. Generally speaking, the Negro brings the brick to the scaffold but does not attempt to place it in the wall; the black man may clean a boiler but a white man makes the repairs. Even in unskilled labor economic competition has caused the white man to invade the black man's field. Wherever he has done so the black man has retired. In the South today white men drive trucks and delivery wagons, clean and repair streets, deliver ice, collect garbage, operate elevators, and serve as waiters and bellmen in hotels.

This proscription of Negroes extended to the North as well. Whatever his qualifications, until recently, it was almost impossible for a black man to find employment at skilled callings. Writing in 1899, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois said,

It is a paradox of the times that young men and women from some of the best Negro families of the city . . . have actually to go South to get work, if they wished to be aught but chambermaids and boot-blacks.¹

In 1911 John Daniels published a study of the Negro in Boston under the title *In Freedom's Birthplace*. He noted that Negroes found it much harder to find employment than white workmen and that they must do better work than whites to secure advance-

¹ *The Philadelphia Negro*, 395-6

ment. In the next year Dr. George Edmund Haynes published *The Negro at Work in New York City*. About the same time Mary Ovington's *Half a Man*, also dealing with the metropolis, came from the press. Both agreed substantially with the conclusions of Mr. Daniels. It is very likely that a study of the Negro in almost any Northern city at that period would have revealed a similar situation.

In some of the unskilled callings, the Negro has been almost welcome in the Northern city. Negroes have constructed hundreds of miles of railroads, streets, sewers and subways. They have been in demand as teamsters, street cleaners, hod carriers and long-shoremen. It is in these unskilled fields that technological unemployment has made its greatest inroads. Oil burning furnaces with thermostat control displaced thousands of Negro janitors. Ditch digging and hoisting machinery have wrought havoc among road workers and hod carriers. The Negro washerwoman is fast being supplanted by the modern steam laundry. The white man is driving the Negro out of the barber's trade, just as Greeks and Italians are driving him out of the shoe-shining business. Occasionally, though not very frequently, a colored cook is found in a non-union restaurant. There is hardly a first-class hotel or restaurant in New York City that employs Negro waiters. Even in domestic service his place is being taken to a large extent by trained white servants. There is a great increase in the number of newspaper advertisements calling for white domestics as compared with a few years ago. Aside from technological displacement, there seem to be two causes for the failure of the Negro to hold his own under economic competition: (1) the white man's prejudice; and (2) the tradition of the black man's lack of reliability.

Dr. Booker T. Washington tells how "every door (was) closed against him on account of his color, except in menial service."² Dr. William N. Berry, pastor of a colored church at Springfield, Massachusetts, once declared that "86 per cent of the colored labor in this city is confined to the lower strata of industry . . . by pure race prejudice."³ Speaking of conditions in St. Louis, Lillian Brandt said, "Negroes cannot be employed as clerks in any of the department stores."⁴ In 1910 only 13.6 per cent of the Negro males gainfully employed in New York City and 18.7 per cent of

² *Future of the American Negro*, 76.

³ *Springfield Weekly Republican*, Feb. 10, 1905, quoted by Alfred Holt Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem*, 162.

⁴ *Negroes of St. Louis*, 36-7.

those employed in Chicago were working in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits.⁵ It has been frequently charged that state licensing boards discriminate against Negroes in the licensing of plumbers, barbers, electricians and other trades.⁶ In those factories to which the Negro was able to gain admittance, he was limited to unskilled labor. There was no hope of progress because the way to skilled jobs was barred by the labor unions. Organized labor felt that it had a good case against the Negro: first, because he was a potential strikebreaker; and second, because he lacked interest in trade unionism. But criticism of the Negro strikebreaker comes with poor grace from unionists who subscribe to a policy of excluding Negroes from their unions.

Even though the employer were unprejudiced, he dared not employ Negroes, for if he did so his white employees might leave.⁷ There are well-authenticated instances of white unionists leaving the job the moment a colored man arrived, even though the latter held a union card.⁸ Other employers do not use Negroes because they believe the public would object to their use. Thus they are not generally employed as motormen or conductors on street cars, as telephone operators, as sales clerks, as bookkeepers or stenographers. In the packing plants they are not allowed to handle sliced bacon or oleo. Taxicab companies and garages often employ Negroes as washers and polishers but rarely as chauffeurs or mechanics. Without the protection of unionism and because of the prejudice against them, when Negro workmen are employed, the practice of paying them a lower wage is widespread. Dr. Raymond Pinchbeck found that in Virginia the average daily wages of white plasterers for a period of twenty years was 20 per cent greater than for Negroes, while the average daily wages of white lathers for the same period was 18 per cent greater.⁹

⁵ Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration during the War*, 50-1.

⁶ National Interracial Congress, *Toward Interracial Cooperation*, 123; Sterling D. Spero & Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker*, 60; Virginius Dabney, "Negro Barbers in the South," *Nation*, July 16, 1930, 131: 64-5; Jesse O. Thomas, "Effect of Changing Economic Conditions upon the Living Standards of Negroes," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1928, 455-66; Raymond Pinchbeck, *The Virginia Negro Artisan and Tradesman*, 94-5.

⁷ Report Industrial Commission on Capital and Labor, VII, 64; Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago*, 390.

⁸ Thomas Dabney, "The Conquest of Bread," *Southern Workman*, Oct., 1928, 57:421; Abram L. Harris, *The New Negro Worker in Pittsburgh*, Ms.; U. S. Bur. Labor, *Sixteenth Annual Report of Commissioner of Labor*, 1901, 413-65; *Opportunity*, Feb., 1926, 39; Aug., 1935, 13:247; Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 271.

⁹ Pinchbeck, *op. cit.*, 105-6. Cf. Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 57; Ira De A. Reid, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, 17.

Barred from the union, the Negro was eligible as a strike-breaker. Here was a loophole. Black labor crawled through it. And once he had shoved his foot over the employee's entrance, the colored man often remained even after the strike was settled. Up to the time of the building trades strike in Chicago (Feb. 5, 1900), there had been little use for Negroes in that calling. The strike gave them their opportunity, and since that time Negro membership in the hod-carriers' union has been especially strong. During the meat-packers' strike (1921-2), the proportion of Negroes on the payroll of one Chicago company rose from 25 to 33 per cent.¹⁰ They have been there ever since. Negroes were responsible for the failure of the steel strike (1919). In Pittsburgh, large numbers of them were imported. The Lackawanna mills, employing only 72 Negroes before the strike, were operated chiefly by Negro labor. Eight thousand Negro strikebreakers were used at Chicago. Here the companies did no importing. Their agents were able to get all they wanted on State Street. Most of them lost their jobs when the contest was over. Thousands were imported into the bituminous coal fields of Pennsylvania during the coal strike of 1922. When the strike was over, 8,000 remained in the Pittsburgh district alone.¹¹ Negroes were used in the railway shopmen's strike of 1922 and gained permanent places in the shops of several systems. The Detroit Urban League furnished Negro labor to break a strike in the metal trades in 1921; the Urban League of Newark assisted in breaking a brickmaking strike at Sayerville, New Jersey, in 1923; and the New York League supplied material to break several strikes in Connecticut cities.¹² This propensity to scab intensifies race feeling. When the Negro forces his way into a trade via the strikebreaking route, the members of the union are doubly enraged: First, because he tends to depress labor standards; and second, because he circumvents their membership policy. Though the greater proportion of strikebreakers usually consists of white and not colored men, Negro strikebreakers are especially signalled out for attack. Often every Negro, no matter what his occupation, who is in the vicinity of the strike, finds himself in danger.

The war with its labor shortage was Ethiopia's opportunity.

¹⁰ Edna Louise Clark, *History of the Labor Controversy in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago*, *Ms.*, 149.

¹¹ Report, U. S. Coal Commission, pt. III, 1506; *The Coal Strike in Pennsylvania*, Report for May, 1928; Abram L. Harris, "Negroes in the Coal Industry," *Opportunity*, Feb., 1926, 4:46.

¹² Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 140, 141, 142.

The employment office of the Chicago Urban League placed 1,792 persons in the twelve months ending October 31, 1917. The number grew to 10,000 persons in 1918 and more than 14,000 in 1919.¹³ During the last six months of 1917 the Detroit Urban League had calls for 5,542 men and 317 women. In Philadelphia, the Armstrong Association placed 2,019 workers between May, 1916, and April, 1917,¹⁴ and in 850 requisitions for unskilled labor at the Federal Labor Exchange there were demands for 186,000 Negroes for August, September and October, 1917.¹⁵ Late in 1920 there were twenty companies with over a thousand Negroes on their payrolls, and 210 others with over two hundred Negro employees.¹⁶ The majority of these were large open shops. They were chiefly employed in seven basic industries: iron and steel mills, automobile manufactures, slaughtering and meat packing, chemical and allied factories, foundries and hardware factories, stone, tile and glass industries, and the clothing trades. The coal mines also attracted thousands, and thousands of others went into rough railroad work and into domestic and personal service.¹⁷

The steel industry centers chiefly about Pittsburgh. Epstein's study of seventeen Pittsburgh plants, visited in May and June, 1916, showed 8,325 Negroes employed as against 2,550 employed by the same firms the year before. Mr. Epstein suggested that if all the plants employing Negroes had been visited, probably 14,000 would have been found in the Pittsburgh district.¹⁸

¹³ Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago*, 366.

¹⁴ George E. Haynes, "Negroes Move North," *Survey*, Jan. 4, 1919, 41: 455-61.

¹⁵ Saddie T. Mossell, *Standards of Living among One Hundred Migrant Families in Philadelphia*, 7, quoting *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Aug. 2, 1918.

¹⁶ T. J. Woofter, Jr., "Negro and Industrial Peace," *Survey*, Dec. 18, 1920, 45:420-1.

¹⁷ According to Charles S. Johnson, the industrial distribution of the Negro in the United States was as follows:

Unskilled: Building trades and helpers 150,000, lumber (saw mills) 107,000, iron and steel 106,000, other industries 86,000, food 28,000, tobacco 22,000, textiles 20,000, clay and brick yards 20,000, fertilizer factories 10,000, other metal industries 4,000, paper and pulp 3,000, tanners 2,500, printing 1,200, clothing 1,400, total 561,000.

Semi-skilled: Chemical plants (principally fertilizer works) 2,200, cigar and tobacco plants 24,000, brick and clay making 3,200, food (principally slaughter houses) 15,000, iron and steel 24,000, lumber 10,000, textiles 4,000, others 25,000, total 107,400.

Skilled: Carpenters 34,000, bricklayers 11,000, merchants 10,000, mechanics 10,000, molders 7,000, painters 9,000, plasterers 7,000, tailors 7,000, total 95,000. Jesse O. Thomas, "Effect of Changing Economic Conditions upon the Living Standards of Negroes," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1928, 455-66. Cf. Johnson, "The Changing Economic Status of the Negro," *Annals of Amer. Acad.*, Nov., 1928, 133.

¹⁸ *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*, 31-2.

A survey by the Pittsburgh Urban League in 1923, covering twenty-three mills, reported the employment of over 16,000 Negroes, or 21 per cent of the total force.¹⁹ In Philadelphia, Miss Mossell found 4,000 at the Midvale Steel Company, 1,000 at the Atlantic Refining Company, and hundreds at other plants.²⁰ In Ohio, Negroes were employed in considerable numbers by at least fifty firms in eighteen industrial cities.²¹ A check-up of the most important steel plants in the Chicago district in the winter of 1926-27 showed 4,164 Negroes here, or 10 per cent of the total force,²² while at about the same time twenty-two plants at St. Louis employed 3,335.²³

Thousands of migrants were absorbed in the automobile industry. In April, 1917, a canvass of twenty of the largest firms in Detroit, mainly manufacturers of automobiles and accessories, showed a total of 2,874 Negro workers.²⁴ In 1919 three plants alone were employing 11,000. The Ford works at River Rouge employed 6,000, or 11 per cent of its total force. Estimates at the Ford Highland Park plant placed the number of Negro employees at about 4,000.²⁵ In 1929, according to figures furnished by the Detroit Urban League, 40,000 Negroes were employed in the manufacture of automobiles and automobile accessories²⁶—15,000 in the Ford plant alone. The force of the Hupp plant was 12 per cent colored, Studebaker 10 per cent, McCord Radiator 10 per cent, Cadillac 5 per cent, Murray Body 4 per cent, Chevrolet 3.5 per cent, Dodge 3.5 per cent, Packard 3 per cent, Timken-Detroit Axle 2.5 per cent, Chrysler 1.5 per cent, Hudson 1.2 per cent, Lincoln 1 per cent, Paige 1 per cent, while many other plants employed less than 1 per cent.²⁷ This is an industry in which practically no Negroes were employed in 1910.

Only 34 Negroes were employed in the Chicago packing plants in 1910. In 1919 4,000 Negroes were employed in two plants alone, and in the following year the Chicago Commission on Race Relations found over 6,400 in four plants.²⁸ Some divisions of the yards

¹⁹ John T. Clark, "Negro in Steel," *Opportunity*, Mar., 1926, 4:87.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, 173-218.

²¹ U. S. Bur. Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, 1924-6, Bull. No. 439, p. 401.

²² Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 154.

²³ William V. Kelley, "St. Louis Negroes in Industry," *Opportunity*, Feb., 1926, 4:70.

²⁴ Haynes, "Negroes Move North," *op. cit.*

²⁵ A. J. Hain, "Our Immigrant, the Negro," *Iron Trade Review*, Sept. 13, 1923, 730-6; Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States*, 298.

²⁶ Charles S. Johnson, *Negro in American Civilization*, 51.

²⁷ Robert W. Dunn, *Labor and Automobiles*, 69, quoted by Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 154-5.

²⁸ *The Negro in Chicago*, *op. cit.*, 361.

and plants were as high as 50 per cent colored.²⁹ Several thousand were employed in the slaughter houses and packing plants at St. Louis.³⁰ Other Chicago opportunities included 15,000 working in the Pullman shops,³¹ 2,000 colored girls employed in two large mail order houses,³² 1,500 at the International Harvester Company,³³ as well as a large number of Pullman porters, asphalt layers, janitors, house wreckers, section hands, waiters, tannery workers, messenger boys, and domestic servants. The neighboring cities of East Chicago, Rockford, Gary, Indiana Harbor, Waukegan and Evans-ton furnished opportunities in the shape of chemical works, fertilizer factories, brick yards, soap factories, rolling mills, lead refining plants, steel foundries, tanneries, fence manufactories, and a bed spring factory.

It is estimated that 6,000 male and 1,000 female workers were employed at Newark, New Jersey. They were engaged in chemical plants, shipyard work, leather factories, iron foundries, construction and teaming.³⁴ Elsewhere in the state were munition plants, brick yards and wire factories. Dr. Haynes estimates 3,000 workers at Jersey City, 3,500 at Carneys Point, 3,000 at Trenton, and 12,000 at other places about the state.³⁵ Over 24,600 Negroes were employed by the United States Shipping Board when the armistice was signed.³⁶

In New York City the largest group was the longshoremen. In 1920 there were 5,386 of these. This was 14 per cent of all the longshoremen in the city, and 9 per cent of all the Negro men at work in the city.³⁷ Negroes dominated the asphalt industry and had a practical monopoly of the elevator service in the residential districts.³⁸ There were several thousand shirtwaist makers and machine operators of various kinds of underwear and outer garments.³⁹

²⁹ G. E. Haynes, *The Negro at Work during the World War and Reconstruction*, 52-6, 153; "Negroes move North," *op. cit.*

³⁰ Scott, *op. cit.*, 100.

³¹ Thos. J. Woofter, Jr., "The Negro and Industrial Peace," *Survey*, Dec. 18, 1920, 45:420-1.

³² Eugene Kinckle Jones, "The Negro in the North," *Current History*, Mar., 1922, 15:969-74.

³³ *The Negro in Chicago*, 361.

³⁴ Haynes, *The Negro at Work during the World War and Reconstruction*, 89.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁶ Wesley, *op. cit.*, 296; Lorenzo J. Greene & Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner*, 259.

³⁷ Bur. of Census, *Fourteenth Census*, IV, 1159.

³⁸ Dowd, *The Negro in American Life*, 20.

³⁹ Jones, "The Negro in the North," *op. cit.*

During the war period a number of railroads brought Negroes northward by the trainload. According to the Department of Labor, 136,065 Negroes were employed on railroads in 1924. Of these about three-fourths were track workers and laborers and one-seventh porters.⁴⁰ There was little opportunity for Negroes on Northern railroads outside the unskilled fields.

But the Negro's opportunities are not all at the North. Saw and planing mills employ more Negroes than any other Southern industry. Negroes practically monopolize the heavy work in the Southern iron mines. They work in the limestone quarries and in the coal mines. In 1928, 25,335 Negroes were employed in the bituminous fields of West Virginia alone.⁴¹ Other thousands are in the fields of Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. They have a virtual monopoly of the phosphate industry. A great many find work in the brick and tile, glass and stone industries, in textiles, in cotton oil mills, and in railroad construction work. Others are employed in canning (fruits, vegetables, fish, crabs and shrimps), in wood distillation, and in the production of turpentine and resin.

In proportion to their population, Negroes furnish a larger percentage of domestic workers than any other group in the United States. According to the census of 1930, 1,576,105 Negroes,⁴² or 28.6 per cent of the total number ten years of age or over, were domestic servants. Negroes generally enter domestic service from sheer necessity and then as a makeshift. Those who are ambitious get out of it if they can. The field is thus left largely to the untrained and inefficient.

The man who went from the farm to the city usually knew only one way to earn a living. But there was no farm work to be done in the city, and he was forced into unskilled labor. It is true that many of the Southern migrants were miners and steel workers from the Birmingham district. But the opposition of the unions, the refusal of white workers to work with them, or prejudice on the part of the employers or foremen usually prohibited their use on skilled jobs. Epstein's study of the *Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh* revealed the fact that 95 per cent of those employed in that city were doing unskilled work.⁴³ Ira De A. Reid's study of twenty-two Pittsburgh plants in 1925 showed only 5 per cent of the Negroes

⁴⁰ "Employment of Negroes on Railroads," *Monthly Labor Review*, Nov., 1924, 19:1105.

⁴¹ Report of W. Va. Bur. of Negro Welfare and Statistics, 1927-8, quoted by *Monthly Labor Review*, Oct., 1929, 29:818-20.

⁴² *Fifteenth Census. Occupation Statistics*, 35.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, 22, 30-3.

doing skilled work at that time.⁴⁴ In 1920 investigators for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations visited sixty-six plants where Negroes were employed. They found that 11,300 out of 12,500 Negroes were doing unskilled work.⁴⁵ Only 10 per cent of the calls received at the employment office of the Detroit Urban League during the war were for skilled and semi-skilled jobs.⁴⁶ According to Spero and Harris, only 35 per cent of the Negroes employed in Detroit in 1926 were engaged in work above the grade of rough manual labor.⁴⁷ These conditions were typical of all northern cities.

There is ground for believing that the jobs which the Negro got were usually those which the native American or Americanized immigrant did not want. This, in great measure, accounts for the large use of Negro workers in fertilizer works, in turpentine camps, in longshore work, in the stockyards, and in the iron and steel mills where the work is hot, dirty and unpleasant. Due to discrimination on the part of labor unions, it is a great deal easier for a Negro to be a teacher, a doctor, or a lawyer than to be a plumber, an electrician, or a barber.

This is not equivalent to saying that the Negro is incapable of doing skilled work. In the coal mines, the garment trades, glass factories, brick and tile yards, cotton mills and automobile plants they have been used in every capacity.⁴⁸ Mr. John B. Abell found a plant in Cleveland in which only 77 out of 442 Negroes were doing common labor.⁴⁹ A number of Southern iron and steel mills have used them successfully in skilled operations.⁵⁰ More than 20 per cent of the Negroes in the United States shipyards during the war, and over 27 per cent after the war, were engaged in skilled work.⁵¹ In the Negro sections of our cities colored salesmen and saleswomen are becoming numerous. White firms are using them to sell goods among their race. The census of 1930 indicates a wide range of industrial activity. Out of 190 male heads of families studied by Dr. Charles S. Johnson at Nashville, 53 were engaged in occupations which were new for Negroes.⁵²

⁴⁴ *The Negro Workers in the Major Industries and Building Trades of Pittsburgh.*

⁴⁵ *Negro in Chicago*, 362-4.

⁴⁶ Haynes, "Negroes move North," *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, 155.

⁴⁸ Greene & Woodson, *op. cit.*, 332-3.

⁴⁹ John B. Abell, "The Negro in Industry," *Trade Winds*, Mar., 1924.

⁵⁰ Greene & Woodson, *op. cit.*, 136.

⁵¹ Haynes, *Negro at Work during the World War and during Reconstruction*, 58.

⁵² *Monthly Labor Review*, July, 1929, 29:66-7.

During the war the great demand for labor sent wages soaring skyward. Epstein's study of the daily wages of 529 workers in Pittsburgh showed 62 per cent receiving from \$2 to \$3 a day and 28 per cent from \$3 to \$3.60. A Detroit study in 1917 showed 161 out of 191 men receiving from \$70 to \$119 a month. Time work in many factories was at the rate of 35 to 40 cents an hour, with a higher rate for overtime.⁵³ Miss Clark's study of 77 migrant families in Chicago showed only 4 wage earners receiving less than \$12 a week; 22 were earning from \$12 to \$14.99, 27 \$15, and 5 between \$15 and \$20.⁵⁴

The minimum wage rate per hour is 42.5 cents, which is the minimum rate for the packing industries. The maximum rate is 61 cents per hour paid by the Corn Products Refining Co. at Argo and the International Harvester Co. Neither of the latter, however, represents a basic wage. The average wage for 36 companies is 48.7 cents.⁵⁵

Wages on railroads ranged from 17 cents an hour for common labor to 55 cents for skilled labor. An official of the Railway Men's International Industrial Benevolent Association estimated that the tips and salary of the average dining car waiter were \$105 a month; porters about the same.⁵⁶ In the case of 31 orders for porters in stores, restaurants, cafes, drug stores and office buildings, the wages ran from \$12 a week to \$25.⁵⁷ By 1923 wage rates had gone still higher. Glass, steel, packing, stevedoring, automobile, and the building trades paid an average of \$4.30 a day, and hod carriers received from \$5.50 to \$6.50.⁵⁸ One large steel plant in Ohio paid its skilled Negro laborers 90 cents an hour.⁵⁹ Thirteen thousand Negroes employed in Detroit received wages ranging from \$3.50 to \$10 a day.⁶⁰

While many plants made no discrimination in the wage rates paid to white and colored labor, yet there was much actual discrimination in that Negroes did not gain ready access to skilled work. Furthermore, employers hesitated to advance Negro workers, especially if advancement entailed authority over white em-

⁵³ Haynes, "Negroes Move North," *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ U. S. Dept. Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 22.

⁵⁵ *The Negro in Chicago*, 366.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁵⁸ P. O. Davis, "Negro Exodus and Southern Agriculture," *Review of Reviews*, Oct., 1923, 68:401-7.

⁵⁹ A. J. Hain, *Iron Trade Review*, Sept. 13, 1923, 730-6.

⁶⁰ *Southern Workman*, Nov., 1923, 52:540.

ploys.⁶¹ In piece work there was a disposition to assign those processes to Negroes which yielded a lower rate of return. In two large Chicago foundries white molders were given standard patterns; while the patterns given to Negro workers were of a type that required frequent changing and interfered with the development of speed. As speed determined the piecework earnings, the Negroes were not able to turn out as much work as the white molders.⁶²

While there is little doubt that the wages of colored laborers are higher in the North than in the South, the increase in the amount of money received is no adequate measure of financial improvement, since the higher cost of rent, food and clothing diminishes the actual surplus. Dr. Mossell found that a yearly income of \$1,829.48, or \$6.10 a day, was necessary to provide a decent standard of living in Philadelphia (1919). In only 41 per cent of the families which she studied did the head of the household receive such a wage. When other members of the family supplemented the income, 64 per cent were able to reach this standard.⁶³ The rest lived below the poverty line. In 1928 the National Industrial Conference Board estimated that the cost of maintaining a fair standard of living for the family of an American industrial worker in a large city was \$31.92 a week; in a medium sized city \$28.91 a week. Yet a study of 2,400 Negro families in New York City the year before revealed the fact that 87.2 per cent received less than this minimum. Almost one-sixth of the families studied earned less than \$75 a month.⁶⁴ Fifty per cent of the Negro unskilled laborers investigated by Dr. Leila Houghteling in Chicago received less than \$1,200 annually.⁶⁵ In his investigation at Minneapolis, Dr. Abram Harris found (1926) that the average weekly wage of the 222 married Negro men interviewed was \$22.55.⁶⁶

Expressions from Northern industrialists regarding the efficiency of Negroes vary as widely as do those concerning white aliens. In Detroit 60 per cent of the employers interviewed said

⁶¹ *The Negro in Chicago*, 366; Niles Carpenter, *Nationality, Color and Economic Opportunity in the City of Buffalo*, 117.

⁶² *The Negro in Chicago*, 365; Detroit Bur. of Governmental Research, *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. 3, 14-15; Chas. S. Johnson, "Black Workers and the City," *Survey*, Mar., 1925, 53:19.

⁶³ Mossell, *op. cit.*, 214.

⁶⁴ Twenty-four Hundred Negro Families in Harlem, unpub. Ms., files of N. Y. Urban League, 19-20.

⁶⁵ *The Income and Standard of Living of Unskilled Laborers in Chicago*, 24-5.

⁶⁶ *Negro Population in Minneapolis*, 28-30.

that the Negro was giving satisfactory service, 20 per cent were neutral, and 20 per cent were dissatisfied.⁶⁷ Out of 1,764 employers interviewed in Cincinnati, 81 per cent found the Negro to be a satisfactory laborer; 19 per cent said he was not.⁶⁸ Of the employers interviewed by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 118 found the Negro satisfactory; 19 said he was not. Seventy-one of these employers thought him equal to white workers; 22 thought him less efficient.⁶⁹ Abram Harris sent questionnaires to 83 plants in Minneapolis employing Negro labor. Thirty-seven were satisfied with their efficiency, while 13 were not, and 33 did not reply.⁷⁰ Mr. E. F. Roberts, vice president of the Packard Motor Company, said, "We have found that the Negro, both in skilled and in semi-skilled labor, is a good worker, considerably better than the European immigrant."⁷¹ A stock yards official said, "they are among the best 'knife men' we have."⁷² The personnel manager of the National Malleable Castings Co. of Cleveland, with seven plants in which Negroes were employed, said, "These men not only do the skilled work but maintain the standard of quality and production established in the shop."⁷³ The personnel manager of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Corporation thought Negro workers both punctual and dependable.⁷⁴ Replies from 111 coal company officials, employing over 6,000 Negroes in West Virginia, indicate that the Negro compares favorably with the other races so employed.⁷⁵

From the employer's viewpoint, the Negro has several advantages over immigrant labor. He understands English, he is outside the scope of revolutionary propaganda, and he is more easily managed. He is reluctant to strike, and does not make periodic demands for increased pay or shorter working days. On the other hand, it is sometimes said that Negroes are less dependable. The most persistent complaint is that they will not work regularly, but lay off on the slightest pretext and are prone to change from one

⁶⁷ T. J. Woofter, Jr., "Negro and Industrial Peace," *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ James H. Robinson, "The Cincinnati Negro Survey and Program," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1919, 524-31.

⁶⁹ *Negro in Chicago*, 373-4.

⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*

⁷¹ Rollin Lynde Harrt, "When the Negro Comes North," *World's Work*, June, 1924, 48:184-92.

⁷² *The Negro in Chicago*, 375.

⁷³ Charles S. Johnson, "When the Negro Migrates North," *World Tomorrow*, May, 1923, 139-41.

⁷⁴ Edward S. McClelland, "Negro Labor in the Westinghouse Electrical and Manufacturing Corporation," *Opportunity*, 1:22-3.

⁷⁵ "Economic Condition of the Negro in West Virginia," *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1923, 16:713-15.

employer to another. Of the 9,000 Negroes brought North by the Erie Railroad in 1917, only 2,000 remained long enough to work out their transportation.⁷⁶ In the Pittsburgh district it frequently required a turnover of 300 per cent to keep the steel mills manned with colored workers.⁷⁷ The Coatesville Midvale plant had to hire from 2,500 to 2,800 men a month in order to keep a steady force of 5,500. The Carnegie Steel plant at Youngstown had to hire five men in order to keep two jobs filled.⁷⁸ The Pfister-Vogel Tannery of Milwaukee employed only 75 men, but it hired 300 Southern Negroes within eighteen months.⁷⁹

There may be reasons for the large labor turnover quite apart from the character of the Negro. As a newcomer without much cash, he was obliged to take the first job he could get. It would be only natural for him to leave when he found something more to his liking. The average monthly turnover of Negro labor in the Detroit industrial establishment employing the largest number of Negroes was 10 per cent. The largest turnover reported by any company in that city, one of the smaller foundries, was 70 per cent. But the first establishment paid 80 cents an hour and made no discrimination between white and black men engaged in the same occupation, while the second plant paid the Negro 53 cents an hour as compared with 70 cents for white labor.⁸⁰ Thus a second cause of the Negro's "unreliability" may be discrimination on the part of the employer. In other cases, as the Pennsylvania and Erie railroads and the Vulcanite Portland Cement Co., the failure of Negro labor was due to want of care in selection. Labor agents working in the South were more likely to come into contact with idlers on the street than the better class workers who were employed during the day.

There is evidence to show that while it takes more time to recruit a satisfactory group of Negro laborers, once the group is assembled it is about as steady as the white group. The 996 Negro men employed at the Detroit plant of the American Car and Foundry Co. showed an average absence of only three a day between October 6, 1918, and January 1, 1919.⁸¹ The International Har-

⁷⁶ U. S. Dept. Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, *op. cit.*, 122-4.

⁷⁷ Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 164.

⁷⁸ U. S. Dept. Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 124.

⁷⁹ Scott, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁸⁰ Hain, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ Quarterly Report of the Welfare and Economic Work by the Assistant Director of Negro Work, American Car and Foundry Co., Detroit plant, Oct. 6, 1918-Jan. 1, 1919.

vester Co., employing 2,093 Negroes in one of its Chicago plants, had a monthly turnover in 1926 of 4.6 per cent as against 4.8 per cent for white labor. In another plant belonging to the same company the Negro turnover was 5.5 per cent as against 4.6 per cent for whites. A foundry at Alliance, Ohio, employing 731 Negroes, reported a turnover of Negro labor of 2 per cent for the six months from February to July, 1926. A metal works at Indianapolis reported a turnover of its Negro labor of 1.4 per cent a month. A group of seventy-five plants in the Cleveland district reported that the Negro shifted only a little more than other workers.⁸²

Other objections to the Negro as a laborer stressed the facts that he was a "slow thinker," that the fumes in munition factories made him ill, that he did not like to work out of doors in cold weather, and that females accustomed to work in the fields failed to make good domestic servants.

Convinced that the Negro was a permanent part of the Northern labor force, labor leaders began an attempt to bring him into the organized labor movement. In April, 1919, the American Federation of Labor declared for a policy of non-discrimination.⁸³ Men of color did not hail this concession with enthusiasm since they felt that the motive was to eliminate them as potential strike-breakers.⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, the declaration of the American Federation did not greatly alter the previous policy. The constituent unions are autonomous or nearly so. The admission of individual members still remains within the jurisdiction of each local union, and in many instances the locals continue to exclude Negroes. Nineteen national and international unions, eight of which are affiliated with the American Federation, exclude Negroes from membership by constitutional provision or ritual. Among these are four railway brotherhoods, the boiler makers, the machinists and the commercial telegraphers. The electrical workers, sheet metal workers, structural iron workers, plasterers, plumbers and steam fitters, granite workers, and carpenters have nothing in their constitutions pertaining to Negro membership but they pursue what is, in effect, an exclusion policy. The Pullman conductors, railway engineers, pattern makers and leather workers do not bar Negroes. But since union

⁸² Spero & Harris, *op. cit.*, 164-6.

⁸³ Report of Proceedings of American Federation of Labor, 1919, 304-6.

⁸⁴ Fred R. Moore, "Letting him into the Labor Union," *World Outlook*, Oct., 1919, 5:28; Kelly Miller, "Negro as a Workman," *American Mercury*, Nov., 1925, 6:310-17; Amy Jaques Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, ii, 69-70.

members will not instruct them, there is no opportunity for them to get the requisite skill to enter these trades. The musicians, candy makers, barbers, hotel and restaurant employees, United Textile Workers, cooks and waiters, laundry workers, tobacco workers, and the American Federation of Teachers pursue a segregation policy and encourage the blacks to organize their separate locals. The longshoremen, hod carriers and common building laborers, tunnel workers, paving men, teamsters, United Mine Workers, and garment cutters admit Negroes freely, although separate locals are sometimes organized.⁸⁵ There are so many Negroes in these last named occupations that the hold of the union would be materially weakened if the colored men were not organized. The American Federation may issue separate charters to colored workers who are excluded from white unions with the consent of that union. In 1929 there were thirty-six local unions and five central labor unions composed exclusively of Negroes. The majority of those organized by the Federation were freight handlers who were barred by constitutional limitation from the union of their craft. On the other hand, there have been cases (e.g., stationary firemen, 1902, and painters and decorators, local No. 1, Baltimore, 1941), where the white union refused to allow the Federation to issue a separate charter.⁸⁶

In occupations where Negroes have won a substantial place, but where organized labor excludes them from membership, Negro protest unions have arisen. The most important national groups organized on this basis are on the railroads. They include the National Order of Locomotive Firemen, the Railway Men's International Benevolent Industrial Association, the Dining Car Men's Association, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in all 10,000 members. In 1919 an attempt was made to federate all the Negro unions under the name of National Brotherhood Workers of America. For the moment it had a dazzling career, but showed incapacity to deal with the problems of labor organization, and disappeared in 1921.

Where Negroes are admitted freely to labor unions and permitted to work on the same terms as their white brethren, they

⁸⁵ Charles S. Johnson, "Negro workers and the unions," *Survey*, Apr. 15, 1928, 60:113-15; Dept. of Labor, Bur. of Labor Statistics, Bull. No. 506, *Handbook of American Trade Unions*, 1929 ed., 79-80, 94, 96, 104, 189, 208, 215; Ira De A. Reid, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, *passim*.

⁸⁶ F. E. Wolfe, *Admission to American Trade Unions*, 128 n. 3; Edward S. Lewis, "Defense Problems of Baltimore Negroes," *Opportunity*, Aug., 1941, 244-6.

have usually proved loyal to their organization. Along with white workers, Negro unionists marched out in the packers strike (1922) and the West Virginia coal strike (1922). Of the 143 New York City unions having Negro membership, 117 reported recent strikes in which Negro members participated.⁸⁷ But it must be remembered that the Negro is mainly engaged in the unskilled and semi-skilled trades and in domestic service. These groups have always proved difficult to organize. In the long run, however, the best interests of black workers will be served by organization. To remain outside the unions means that they will be barred from skilled labor and unable to rise from the menial tasks with which, today, so large a portion of the race are occupied.

It would seem that there are about 300,000 Negroes who are members of labor unions today.⁸⁸ But their purpose is somewhat different from that of white unionists. The Negro joins a union and pays his dues so that he may be able to work if he can find it. But whether a colored unionist gets hired depends upon factory policy and upon the attitude of the foreman who does the hiring. Thus union membership does not offer the colored worker security in the same sense that it benefits the white worker. It may even work against him. Employers have been known to threaten to discharge their Negro workers when wage agreements compel them to pay Negroes wage rates equal to those of white workers. In at least one instance, the Building Service Employees' Union allowed the employers to carry out their threat, and then filled the vacancies with white unionists.⁸⁹ Sometimes employers make secret agreements to hire Negro unionists at wages below the union standard. More than any other class, the Negro is the victim of the "kickback racket." In this case the foreman makes a secret agreement with certain workers to hire them provided they pay him certain sums for so doing. When pay day comes he meets such workers and gets a "cut" from their wage. As long as they continue to pay, they keep their job. Negroes are not the only victims of this policy, but they are more likely to be intimidated because they cannot easily get jobs elsewhere.

The recent conflict within organized labor, resulting in the

⁸⁷ Charles Lionel Franklin, *The Negro Labor Unionist in New York*, 247.

⁸⁸ Eugene Kinckle Jones, "The Negro in Industry and in Urban Life," *Opportunity*, May, 1934, 12:141-4; Johnson, *Negro in American Civilization*, 107; Reid, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, 103, 107, 123; *Negro Year Book*, 1937-8, 61; Franklin, *op. cit.*, 111-13, 160; *Cavalcade of the American Negro*, 1940, 58-9.

⁸⁹ Franklin, *op. cit.*, 241.

forming of a rival labor movement, is regarded hopefully by Negro workers. The American Federation of Labor is made up of craft unions. Not only has it discriminated against the Negro, but it has paid little attention to the needs of unskilled workers. Since the majority of Negro workers are unskilled, they have had little assistance from the Federation. But, unlike the American Federation, the Committee for Industrial Organization is made up of industrial unions. Attempting to organize all types of laborers in each industry, it pursues a non-discriminatory policy. Over 100,000 black workers have entered its ranks. Almost all the C.I.O. unions have some Negro officers, and a Negro is president of a large steel workers local near Birmingham.⁹⁰

The gains of the war period have not been maintained. While the war lasted the demand for labor was overwhelming. The employment of Negroes did not cause a displacement of white workers, and there was no economic rivalry between the races. But when prosperity was over somebody had to go without jobs. The return of the troops from overseas or the training camps complicated the problem. Adjustment from war to peace conditions is always difficult. It is discouragingly slow for a man who is out of a job. In such times white men often resent finding themselves idle while Negroes hold jobs. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that most of the Negroes were non-union men while a large portion of the unemployed whites were unionists. This condition played its part in the massacre at East St. Louis and in the Chicago riots of 1919.

Yet somehow the Negro laborer struggled on until 1929 when Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall. It spelled disaster for everybody, but the Negro was particularly hard hit. He lost his job. He walked the street hungry. But for government charity, thousands would have starved to death.

Despite social and political discrimination, it is a mistake to assume, as many people do, that the Negro is better off in the Northern than in the Southern states. In the North the colored man may ride in the same street car and send his children to the same schools with white people; but he is always subject to economic restriction. He is no longer secure in industry. Generally speaking, he is per-

⁹⁰ Reginald A. Johnson, "Not a Bad Year," *Opportunity*, Mar., 1938, 16:71-4; Robert C. Francis, "The Negro and Industrial Unionism," *Social Forces*, Dec., 1936, 15:272-5; Charles S. Johnson, "The Negro," *Amer. J. of Sociology*, May, 1942, 47:854-64; Alfred B. Lewis, "The Negro Worker and his Union," *Opportunity*, Oct., 1939, 305.

mitted to work only in menial pursuits and ill-paid callings undesired by the whites. Such discrimination is the most drastic of all discrimination because it determines his income and permanently denies to himself and his family an opportunity to raise their cultural standards. The Negro can get as hungry as a white man, and there is no magic in his dark skin which will transform lower pay than white workers receive into equal standards of goods and services. A lower income means a lower standard of living. A lower standard of living means poorer food and shabbier clothing. It means that he must live in the poorest houses in the filthiest slums where he meets vice, poverty, disease and death. In the South his labor is in demand because that is the only kind of labor to which the South is accustomed. But he does not have a vote. In the North he has a vote—but without the opportunity to earn a livelihood.

CHAPTER VI

THE WAGE EARNER: DEPRESSION AND DEFENSE

While the wave of depression which struck the country in 1929 affected all classes, there can be little doubt that the Negro was more severely hit than any other group. As a rule, when slack times come, the common laborers and unskilled workers are the first to be laid off. The Negro suffered more than the white from the operation of this general rule because of his predominance in unskilled labor. The largest single concentration of Negro workers was in building construction which came almost to a complete standstill. When the incomes of persons of moderate salaries were curtailed, domestic servants were dispensed with. These various factors resulted in a heavy displacement of Negro workers. From mines, mills and factories a stream of colored folk moved restlessly from city to city searching work. Many fugitives from depression returned to the cotton fields. But even there agricultural and industrial conditions have changed radically in the past two decades.

Surveys by various agencies develop the following significant facts: (1) There is a greater proportion of unemployment among Negroes than among whites. According to figures gathered by the National Urban League in 1931, Negroes formed 17 per cent of the population of Baltimore and 31.5 per cent of the unemployed; in Chicago they constituted 4 per cent of the population and 16 per cent of the unemployed; in Philadelphia, 7 per cent of the population and 16 per cent of the unemployed; in Pittsburgh, 8 per cent of the population and 38 per cent of the unemployed; in Charleston, South Carolina, 49 per cent of the population and 70 per cent of the unemployed.¹ Dr. John H. Willits of the University of Pennsylvania conducted a careful study of unemployment in Philadelphia from 1929 through 1932 with the following results:

PER CENT OF UNEMPLOYED

	Negroes	Whites
1929	15.7	9
1930	19.4	13.8
1931	35	24.1
1932	56	39.7 ²

¹ National Urban League, *The Negro in the Industrial Depression*; "Negroes out of Work," *Nation*, Apr. 22, 1931, 132:441-2.

² John H. Willits, "Some Impacts of the Depression upon the Negro in Philadelphia," *Opportunity*, July, 1933, 11:201.

In 1933 there were 2,117,644 Negroes on relief throughout the entire country. This was 17.8 per cent of all Negroes and 18.4 per cent of all cases on relief. Thus it appears that at this time the Negro contributed nearly twice as high a proportion as whites to the relief rolls, constituting, as he did, only 9.4 per cent of the population.³ In January, 1935, the number of Negroes on relief was 3,500,000, or 29 per cent of the Negro population.⁴ In all the large cities, the relief loads for Negroes far exceed their ratio to the total population. According to Bernard S. Deutsch, president of the Board of Aldermen of New York City, the Harlem District showed 129 persons per thousand on relief as compared with 66 per thousand for the city as a whole (1935).⁵ Negroes among the E.R.B. cases were more than four times the proportion of Negroes in the city population.⁶ As a rule, the unemployed Negroes have come from occupations which are more poorly paid; they are therefore likely to have low economic reserves. Under the impact of unemployment and curtailed income, living conditions have progressively deteriorated. Those unable to pay their rents have been evicted from their homes, thus adding to the local relief problem.⁷

(2) In some localities there is a tendency to substitute white for colored workers. White girls replaced Negro waiters, hotel workers, and elevator operators in many cities; while white men replaced Negroes as teamsters, street cleaners, and garbage collectors. In one city six hundred janitor jobs formerly held by Negroes were vacated.⁸ In January, 1938, the Greyhound Bus Lines dismissed its Negro "bus service stewards" and filled their places by white "baggage checkers."⁹ Various organizations were organized to compel the dismissal of Negroes through pressure on employers. White people continuing to employ Negro servants have received anonymous telephone calls demanding that they dismiss

³ F.E.R.A., *Unemployment Relief Census*, Oct., 1933, reports I, II; Charles S. Johnson, "Incidence upon Negroes," *Amer. Journal of Sociology*, May, 1935, 40:737-45.

⁴ John P. Davis, "A Black Inventory of the New Deal," *Crisis*, May, 1935, 42:141-2.

⁵ *New York Times*, June 19, 1935, 8:4. Cf. *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1936, 26:1; Mar. 21, 1937, 2:1; June 23, 1937, 27:2; Joseph S. Hines, Jr., "Negroes: Working and Jobless," *Survey Graphic*, Aug., 1936, 25:236-7.

⁶ *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1936, 25:7.

⁷ New York Urban League, *The Forgotten Tenth*, Color Line Series, No. 1, p. 40.

⁸ Jesse O. Thomas, "Effect of Changing Economic Conditions upon the Living Standards of Negroes," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1928, 455-66; *The Negro in the Industrial Depression*; *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 8, 1930; *Business Week*, May 23, 1933, p. 10; *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1933, 10:21; Aug. 27, 1933, iv, 6:1.

⁹ *Monthly Labor Review*, Aug., 1939, 49:360-3.

them. Houses painted by Negroes have been smeared over night, and white contractors warned not to continue their employment.¹⁰ Negroes who did retain their jobs suffered serious wage reductions. According to a study which Dr. Earle Eubank, of the University of Cincinnati, conducted in that city (1933), employed whites were reduced from an average weekly wage of \$35.62 to one of \$7.61, or 78 per cent; while employed Negroes were reduced from an average weekly wage of \$26.47 to \$4.32, or 83 per cent.¹¹

(3) There is evidence that in the jobs created for the relief of the unemployed, such as public works, the Negroes found it harder to get work than did whites.¹² The Negro's experience with both C.W.A. and P.W.A. has been bitter.¹³ For though the Secretary of the Interior and the administrator of the Civil Works Administration both ruled against racial discrimination, such discrimination was exercised by the local agencies which administered the projects.

Taking the country as a whole (says Forrester B. Washington, director of Negro Work, F.E.R.A.) very few skilled Negro mechanics or Negroes of the professional classes, or Negroes of the clerical classes, were provided with employment. While the national office of the F.E.R.A. is opposed to discrimination, there is discrimination in the average local community and a Negro worker is unable to obtain a white collar job.¹⁴

According to the National Urban League, in the eastern cotton belt 35 per cent of the unemployed whites had relief work. But only 18 per cent of the unemployed Negroes were able to secure such work.¹⁵ There are wage discriminations, too. In New Orleans, whites on work relief received \$16.80 a week; Negroes doing the same type of work \$10.50. Teachers in F.E.R.A. schools for adults received \$9.60 a week, if colored; but white teachers with lighter schedules obtained \$14.40.¹⁶ In one city, where more than twenty-five school

¹⁰ T. Arnold Hill, "Briefs from the South," *Opportunity*, Feb., 1933, 11:55.

¹¹ *The Consequences of Unemployment in Cincinnati*, reprinted from the Report of the "Ohio Commission of Unemployment Insurance," Jan., 1933.

¹² *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1931, ii, 6:2; Jan. 14, 1932, 9:1; Sept. 11, 1932, 14:5; *The Negro in the Industrial Depression*, 96.

¹³ *Opportunity*, June, 1935, 13:186.

¹⁴ "The Negro and Relief," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1934, 178-94. *Vid.* O. G. Villard, "Slumbering Fires in Harlem," *Nation*, Jan. 22, 1936, 142:99-101.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1937, 7:2. *Vid. The Forgotten Tenth, op. cit., passim.*

¹⁶ Carlton Beals & Abel Plum, "Louisiana's Black Utopia," *Nation*, Oct. 30, 1935, 141:503-5.

buildings were being erected by C.W.A. funds, no Negroes were employed—not even on one which was to be attended by colored pupils. Construction projects, such as Boulder Dam and the various river projects, have included relatively few Negro workers. The projects carried on under the Tennessee Valley Authority are exceptions to this general rule. Here many unskilled Negroes were employed, but they were seldom used in any other capacity than as rough labor.

The youth program had a better record. Although Negroes were slow to become aware of the service, approximately 200,000 colored youth ultimately served in the C.C.C., contributing some \$600,000 a month to the income of their families.¹⁷ During 1938-9, 113 Negro colleges participated in the student-aid program of the National Youth Administration, receiving an annual allotment of \$420,420. Sixty-four thousand Negro youth were employed on the student work program, of whom 55,000 were in grade and high schools, and 9,000 in colleges and universities.¹⁸

Perhaps the greatest single employer of Negroes was W.P.A. During 1939 over 1,000,000 Negroes, including the dependent members of families, owed their living directly to W.P.A. It was W.P.A. which gave Negro white-collar workers their first real opportunity. Jobs as clerks, stenographers, timekeepers and supervisors became available. Negroes benefited by the facilities built by W.P.A. New public libraries were constructed. State colleges for colored youth in the South added new buildings.¹⁹

(4) In Northern cities there was no discrimination against Negroes in matters of relief doles. Public policy demands equality of treatment. To refuse relief to Negroes would convert them into criminals, substituting for a program of rehabilitation at public expense one of demoralization at considerably greater public expense. Late in 1941, according to Henry W. Pope, executive secretary of the West Harlem Council of Social Agencies, 72,000 of Harlem's 478,000 inhabitants were on direct relief. If those dependent on W.P.A., private relief agencies, old age pensions and other aid were included, Mr. Pope thought probably 45 per cent of Harlem's popu-

¹⁷ *Negro Year Book*, 1937-8, p. 21; Chas. S. Johnson, "Incidence upon Negroes," *op. cit.*; Chas. S. Johnson, "The Negro," *Amer. J. of Sociology*, May, 1942, 47:854-64; "The CCC Work for Negro Youth," *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1939, 48:846-7; "Negro Youth in Depression Years," *Monthly Labor Review*, Aug., 1940, 51:353-5.

¹⁸ "New Opportunities for Negro Youth," *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1939, 48:1319-21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Mar., 1940, 50:636-8.

lation were dependent on charity.²⁰ The burden on community chests would have been much greater were it not for the work which colored organizations did to help their own unemployed. James H. Hubert, executive secretary of the New York Urban League, declared that 15,000 needy persons received direct assistance from the League during 1939. Ten thousand more were directed to other agencies. Four hundred and thirty were placed in jobs.²¹ In 1940 the League assisted 18,000 persons in various ways. Many churches maintained free kitchens, some of them averaging more than one hundred meals a day.

Southern localities furnished exceptions. Here there were "understandings" between the great planters and the local relief administrations to prevent the "demoralization" of Negro labor. In Southern cities there was a general complaint that Negroes must choose between accepting work on the plantations at a rate lower than the relief dole or being arrested for vagrancy.²² After all, the Southern Negro is voteless, while the poor white who gets the relief dole has one argument which all politicians understand. In other communities the planters refused to "carry" their tenants, leaving the burden to fall on the local relief agency, and then complained that "Niggers ain't worth a damn; high wages is ruinin' 'em."

(5) A reduction of the relief rolls left a large number of penniless Negroes on the community which private industry could not or would not absorb. The F.E.R.A. reported,

Negroes have been displaced from employment at twice the rate of whites, and are being returned to private industry only one-half as fast as whites.²³

The records of the Harlem offices of the E.R.B. over a period of seven months showed 5,737 cases (2.6 per cent) in the district closed because the worker had found employment. Elsewhere in the city 53,043 (4.96 per cent) of the cases had been so closed. The differential in the employment rate for Negroes gives them "about one-half of a bad chance of getting a job."²⁴ "Practically no placement of Negro white collar workers has taken place through the state employment offices," says Lester B. Granger, executive director of the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of Urban Colored Population.²⁵ In the entire country, the

²⁰ *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1941, 10:4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 27, 1940, 8:3; Mar. 17, 1941, 14:8.

²² *Negro Year Book*, 1937-8, p. 19.

²³ *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1937, 7:2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1937, ii, 1:6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1937, 11:1.

records of the American Federation of Labor show a job increase of 1,531,591 from September, 1936, to September, 1937.²⁶ The W.P.A. rolls show a reduction of 2,004,516 during the same period.²⁷ In view of the fact that the men returned to jobs were nearly 500,000 less than that amount, the reduction was somewhat drastic. However, the records of the Department of Industrial Relations of the Chicago Urban League show an 80 per cent increase in placement in 1937 over the previous year. The United States Employment Service, Illinois State Employment Service, and other agencies indicate similar progress.²⁸ Still, as late as the early part of 1942 there were 117,000 unemployed Negroes in Harlem,²⁹ and at the same time Negroes made up 40 per cent of the 14,000 Cleveland families still on relief or W.P.A.³⁰

(6) Negro workers who were placed were largely restricted to unskilled jobs and manual labor, and this had a direct effect upon income. In February, 1939, the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of Colored Urban Population found that, except for garment and fur trades in New York City, the factories offered few openings for colored labor. A carpet factory in Yonkers, with 6,000 workers on its pay rolls, hired no Negroes. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which writes more insurance among colored people than all the Negro insurance companies combined, stated that no Negroes were employed in its force of more than 20,000 employees in New York State. The largest public utility in the state reported "perhaps a dozen" colored persons among its employees. One of the largest department stores in New York City, which had at different periods of the year between 10,000 and 19,000 on its staff, included only 175 Negro men on its pay roll. All of these were elevator operators or cafeteria or kitchen workers. Only about 65 colored persons were reported among the New York World's Fair administrative staff of 1,200 and construction crews of 700. In up-state New York employment of Negroes in the large factories and wholesale and retail establishments was practically non-existent. Out of 335,120 employees of private firms in Rochester, only 70 were Negroes. The largest firm, Eastman Kodak Company, employing 16,351 persons, reported one Negro porter and

²⁶ *American Federationist*, Oct. 1937.

²⁷ *Annual Report*, 1937.

²⁸ Reginald A. Johnson, "Not a Bad Year," *Opportunity*, Mar., 1938, 16:71-4; Joseph H. Hines, Jr., "War Boom in Columbus," *Opportunity*, Dec., 1939, 377; "Placement of Colored Workers by United States Employment Service," *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1938, 46:891-4.

²⁹ *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1942, 25:3.

³⁰ *Business Week*, May 9, 1942, 70-2.

19 construction workers. Another firm manufacturing optical goods reported 3,000 employees—no Negroes. Two clothing manufacturers reported 4,000 employees—no Negroes. The Committee's survey of Syracuse included 10,288 employees among whom were 15 Negro workers occupied as cleaners and laborers. Only four colored workers were reported among 29,932 employees in Binghamton, Endicott and Johnson City. A cigar factory at Poughkeepsie was employing twelve semi-skilled Negroes, but among the other 5,252 employees covered by the Committee's survey in the same city only seven colored workers in the unskilled groups were reported. The Committee "was at a loss to understand how Negroes in these and other communities in the up-state region managed to make a living and survive starvation."³¹ The records of the United States Employment Service showed a slower rate of placement for colored workers than for whites, and practically no demand for skilled workers.³²

Some active campaigns, including boycotts, have been launched in colored neighborhoods with a view to securing more jobs. One in 1934-5 resulted in the employment of several hundred Negro clerks in Harlem stores. Among the large establishments which subsequently agreed to employ Negroes in white collar jobs were the New York Telephone Company, Consolidated Edison Company, and Liggett's Drug Stores.³³ The Fifth Ave. Coach Company and the New York City Omnibus Corporation agreed to employ Negro drivers after the street corners where buses stopped to pick up Negro passengers had been picketed for several weeks.

As for wages, according to the Survey of Consumers' Incomes in the United States by the National Resources Committee, during the year 1935-6, 47 per cent of the urban Negro families in the South earned less than \$500 a year; 86 per cent earned less than \$1,000. In Northern cities of more than 100,000 population, 6.6 per cent of the Negro families received less than \$500 a year; more than one-third of them less than \$1,000.³⁴ The average annual

³¹ "Report of Temporary Commission on the Condition of Urban Colored Population in New York State," *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1938, 46:1376-80; "Restrictions in Employment of Negroes in New York," *ibid.*, Aug., 1939, 49:360.

³² Robert C. Weaver, "The Defense Program and the Negro," *Opportunity*, Nov., 1940, 324-7; "Placement of Colored Workers by U. S. Employment Service," *Monthly Labor Review*, Apr., 1938, 46:891-4; *New York Times*, May 17, 1941, 9:6.

³³ "Harlem Pact for Employment of White-collar Negro Workers," *Monthly Labor Review*, Sept., 1938, 47:557-8; *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1938, 1:4; Aug. 29, 1938, 8:3.

³⁴ Robert C. Weaver, "Negroes Need Housing," *Crisis*, May, 1940, 138; *New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1938, iv. 7:4.

family income for Negroes in New Jersey in 1931 was \$1,052; in 1938 \$880. In the latter year 30 per cent of the families interviewed had incomes below \$600.³⁵ A survey of Maryland by the American Youth Commission (1936-7) discovered the median weekly wages paid to 1,029 colored youth in that state were \$7.98 as compared with \$14.33 paid to 4,474 young white persons.³⁶

The New Deal program, affecting interest in those who are "ill-fed, ill-clothed, and ill-housed," has done little to aid this submerged tenth of our population. Indeed, the Negro has actually lost under most of the New Deal measures. The National Industrial Recovery Act purported to raise wages, thus increasing the purchasing power of labor. Government is responsible to pressure, and the N.R.A. was under constant pressure from powerfully organized and articulate groups. Except for the exceptional groups, such as the longshoremen, Negroes are excluded from labor unions. They are, therefore, largely unorganized and without power to bargain collectively. Few Negroes appeared to represent their race at the code hearings. Perhaps that fact explains why the codes often discriminated against Negro workers. Generally a differential of 10 or 20 per cent was made between Northern and Southern workers on the ground that living costs were lower in the South. Moreover, the term "South," as applied in the codes, was a flexible one, moving up and down through the border states to meet racial situations developed by each particular code. In most of the codes, Delaware and Maryland were considered Northern states. But when the fertilizer code was drawn—this being an industry predominantly Negro—Southern wage rates were approved. In many cases the codes discriminated against laborers in the lowest paid groups, most of whom are Negroes. The 20 per cent increase in wages provided in the hotel code is of this character, for the wage increase of the colored bellboy was calculated on a salary of \$15 a month, while that of the white was based on a salary of perhaps \$80 a month. In the steel, laundry and tobacco codes, the Negro received lower minimum wages than whites. In two Southern steel districts, where Negroes constitute from 70 to 80 per cent of the common labor, the established minimum was twenty-five cents an hour; in nineteen other districts the minimum was from thirty-five to forty cents.³⁷ The lumber code fixed the minimum at the South,

³⁵ "Economic Status of Negroes in New Jersey," *Monthly Labor Review*, Sept., 1939, 49:630.

³⁶ "Negro Youth in Depression Years," *Ibid.*, Aug. 1940, 51:353-5.

³⁷ George E. Haynes, "The Negro's Economic Security," *Christian Century*, June 5, 1935, 52:757-9.

where colored labor is chiefly employed, at twenty-three cents an hour. At the North it was forty cents. The code of the cotton textile industry, effective July 17, 1933, provided wage increases for all types of employees except outside gang crews and cleaners, 90 per cent of whom are Negroes. For these classes this code made no provision for reduction of hours or increase of wages, despite the fact that the price of commodities had increased as much as 30 per cent.³⁸ On January 1, 1934, an executive order of the National Recovery Administration created wage scales for this group equal to 75 per cent of the minimum already set, together with a work week four hours in excess of the maximum weekly hour scale then in operation. While the \$9-a-week minimum represented an increase in some Southern mills, it was less than the minimum obtaining in others; and when the upward trend of prices is considered such increases as were granted, thought of in terms of buying power, were entirely swallowed up. The unfavorable conditions established for Negro labor under this code were used as precedents in more than thirty other codes of "fair competition," affecting disadvantageously more than 20,000 Negro workers. All this despite the fact that Negro wage earners in cotton textiles were already receiving wages which were below a subsistence level, and the purpose of the minimum wages set up by the codes was to increase buying power! And there was no code for domestic servants!

Even this is too favorable a statement of the case, for the compliance machinery was so constructed that Southern Negroes were easily deprived of such advantages as the codes did provide. At first code enforcement was in the hands of local compliance boards made up from chambers of commerce members, many of whom were code violators. Fear of discharge would cause individual Negroes to hesitate long before complaining to such a board. Later, when paid employees of the N.R.A. took over the compliance boards, matters did not improve. Thousands of cases are recorded in which Negroes, complaining of wages below the code minimum, lost their jobs.³⁹ In cases where the codes were enforced, compelling employers to pay higher wages to Negroes, there was a tendency to replace them by white workers. The N.R.A. did not raise the purchasing power of the Negro; instead his security in the jobs he still held was weakened.

The Social Security Act is of little service to Negroes since it

³⁸ New York *Times*, June 30, 1933, 4:2.

³⁹ John P. Davis, "Blue Eagles and Black Workers," *New Republic*, Nov. 14, 1934, 81:7-9.

excludes from benefits under the old age security and unemployment provision, domestic, agricultural and casual workers. The greater number of Negroes employed fall in these groups. At the same time these workers, like all Negroes, must pay increased prices for everything they buy in order to furnish a reserve for the payment of old age and unemployment benefits. Old age pensions and unemployment insurance are designed to take care of persons "who have been wage earners." It is an established fact that the proportion of Negroes who will remain permanently unemployed will probably be far above their proportion to the population. Moreover, the administration of various phases of the act is left in the hands of local committees, and here it will be easy for Southern whites to prevent the Negro from receiving benefits even when he is entitled to them. The disfranchised Negro can hardly hope for social security when he has no political power.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 affects only employees of those who are engaged in interstate commerce or the production of goods for interstate commerce. It would seem that workers employed in iron and steel, machinery, automobile industries, lumber and furniture, tobacco, fertilizer and chemicals, and the sleeping car porters, railway dining car waiters, and red caps in railway stations are in this category. It is estimated that three-quarters of a million Negroes should gain substantially from the national effort to place a rising floor under wages and a lowering ceiling over hours.

The beginning of the American program for the defense of democracy brought a challenge to the traditional occupational policies with reference to Negro workers. Billions of dollars were earmarked for defense contracts. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1,400,000 additional workers would be needed in war industries between April, 1940, and April, 1942. Shipbuilding would require 323,900 more men, aircraft 408,000, ordnance and machine tools 291,000, construction 384,000.⁴⁰ But in city after city thousands of local Negroes were denied employment while thousands of outside white workers were drawn in. The population of one Southern ship-building center rose suddenly from 114,000 to 135,000. To care for the in-migrant workers, 500 defense housing units had to be built at a cost of \$3,000 each, to say nothing of the loss of time, the absorption of critical materials in housing, and the problem created for the local government by the influx of workers. For the increased population placed a great strain on local water, sewer,

⁴⁰ Testimony of Sidney Hillman before Committee of House of Representatives, July 15, 1940.

hospital and school facilities, police and fire protection. From 6,000 to 8,000 commuters are making daily trips of sixty miles to work, despite the imminence of a tire shortage.⁴¹ In Cleveland, where 40 per cent of the relief cases, 30 per cent of W.P.A., and 22 per cent of those registered for jobs at the Public Employment Service were Negroes, two-thirds of the concerns with defense contracts hired no Negroes for skilled or semi-skilled work. Most of the concerns in Pittsburgh employed Negroes only as unskilled workers or not at all. At Warren, Ohio, nineteen plants employing 13,000 men had 500 Negro workers. In Kansas City, Missouri, eleven of the twenty-seven concerns holding defense contracts had never employed Negroes and did not intend to do so. Six were employing them only in menial capacities. Out of 146 Illinois firms, 95 employed no Negroes. In the 51 firms using Negro labor, colored employees constituted only 3.6 per cent of the combined labor force.⁴² In Delaware a shortage of skilled and semi-skilled foundry workers developed early. There were similar shortages in West Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan and Connecticut. Representatives of industry were touring neighboring states and offering high wages to white workers who would migrate, while local colored labor was left unemployed. A shortage of power sewing machine operators, needed to sew uniforms, would be to a considerable extent ameliorated if Negro operators were more widely employed. A Chicago plant manufacturing gas masks refused to hire Negro power sewing machine operators in spite of the fact that no white operators were available. Meanwhile, several hundred Negro operators registered with the Chicago employment service continued to be unemployed.⁴³ A government survey found only 142 Negroes out of 29,215 employees in ten war plants in the New York area. Mr. Joseph Tierney, assistant director of the New York State Employment Service, said that 1,400 skilled and semi-skilled workers were placed in metal trades during April, 1941. Only 20 of these were Negroes.⁴⁴ Of 215,427 placements by the United States Employment Service in selected skilled and semi-skilled occupations (Oct., 1940-Apr., 1941), non-whites accounted for only 4,443 (21 per cent). In twenty selected defense manufacturing industries, Negroes received but 2,382 jobs out of 221,600 placements (3.3 per

⁴¹ "The Negro's War," *Fortune*, June, 1942.

⁴² Beulah Amidon, "Negroes and Defense," *Survey Graphic*, June, 1941, 30:320-6.

⁴³ Federal Security Agency, *Negro Workers and the National Defense Program*, 5-6, 19.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, May 8, 1941, 16:5.

cent). In all manufacturing industries Negroes received 35,432 jobs out of 539,335 placements (6.6 per cent).⁴⁵ It is clear that this kind of discrimination tends to retard production, intensifies labor shortages, contributes to competition for labor, causes unnecessary migration of workers, accentuates housing shortages in certain areas, and compels government expenditures for defense housing.

It is untrue that supplies of skilled Negro labor to fill these needs do not exist. A large number of Negroes have traditionally been employed as "helpers" in skilled occupations. As "helpers," many of them have gradually become qualified mechanics, although the customary labor policy of not promoting Negroes has prevented them from rising to skilled or semi-skilled jobs.

One of the chief obstacles to the employment of Negroes is the race ban on membership in labor unions. In one Cleveland plant where there was an urgent need for additional workers to meet war schedules the management was ready to hire Negroes. The Machinists' Union (AFL) entered a protest. No Negroes have been hired.⁴⁶ Both the Chrysler and Packard companies introduced a few highly skilled Negro workers into their plants with the result that the workers staged a sit-down strike.⁴⁷ White members of the U.A.W. (CIO) walked out of the Hudson Ordnance plant in Detroit, wholly engaged in production for the Navy, because eight Negro skilled workers were promoted to machine work.⁴⁸ Three hundred tool and die workers at the Curtiss-Wright factory went on a strike when a Negro was employed in the tool department.⁴⁹ At Belleville, New Jersey, 600 girls, members of the Chemical and Oil Workers' Union, threatened to quit if Isolantite, Inc. hired Negro girls.⁵⁰ The Shipbuilders' Union (AFL) of Tampa, Florida, signed a closed shop agreement with the Tampa shipyard building defense shipping. The union refused membership to 500 shipyard Negroes then employed, throwing them out of work. The International Association of Machinists holds closed shop contracts with twelve aircraft manufacturing companies. The Machinists' Union bars Negroes from membership by ritualistic oath.⁵¹ The desire to avoid possible friction makes many employers in defense industries hesitate to take on Negro workers. Even if the work itself were not

⁴⁵ Federal Security Agency, *op. cit.*, 9.

⁴⁶ *Business Week*, May 9, 1942, 70-2.

⁴⁷ *The Negro's War*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ *Crisis*, July, 1942, 215.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1941, 30:4.

⁵⁰ *Time*, Mar. 2, 1942, 39:13-14.

⁵¹ Lester B. Granger, *The Negro and Economic Opportunity*.

affected, the introduction of Negro labor might open the question of separate washrooms, cafeterias and recreational facilities.

One item of the defense training program includes an appropriation of \$60,500,000, voted by Congress in 1940, for preemployment and refresher-training courses, to be supervised by the United States Office of Education. The administration of these funds is usually entrusted to the state and local school authorities. Many boards of education and vocational training officials take the position that since industry is not disposed to hire Negroes it is useless to train them for defense work. It is not uncommon to find that while the local demand calls for machine shop, sheet metal, riveting and welding trainees, the courses opened for Negroes are in wood-working, bricklaying and auto servicing. Cumulative enrollments, covering the period from July 1, 1941, to February 28, 1942, indicate that in the Southern states east of the Mississippi, where Negroes constitute from one-third to one-half of the total labor force, the percentage of Negroes in pre-employment defense training classes ranged from .6 per cent in Florida to 6.3 per cent in South Carolina. West of the Mississippi the proportions are higher, ranging from 1.2 per cent in Texas to 10 per cent in Arkansas. The largest number of Negro enrollments were shown in the Great Lakes region, where 46 per cent of all Negro enrollments were concentrated, and in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and the District of Columbia, where another 28 per cent are found. The total Negro enrollments at this time were only 7,297, or four per cent of the total enrollments in such courses.⁵²

At Birmingham, Alabama, in mid-March, 1941, 350 whites were attending twenty-six classes in machine shop, welding, drafting, and pattern making. For Negro youth there was one class in blueprint reading with fourteen students. Knoxville, Tennessee, had fifteen courses for whites and one in auto service (polishing cars and filling gas tanks) for Negroes. Atlanta had fifty-four courses, but only four were taught in Negro schools. Here 6,000 Negroes who have registered to work in the new Bell Aircraft plant have sought for nearly six months to have training classes established for them similar to those already set up for white workers in that city. There is no class in operation, although Bell officials are ready to hire 4,000 Negro workers if they are trained for the job. At Chattanooga, Tennessee, fourteen defense courses were set up for white students, and none for Negroes.⁵³ A New Orleans shipyard, recently repre-

⁵² National Urban League, *Report of Progress in the War Employment of Negro Labor*, 6; *Employment Security Review*, July, 1942, 9.

⁵³ National Urban League, *op. cit.*, 6; Granger, *op. cit.*; Amidon, *op. cit.*

manded by the Maritime Commission for falling behind schedule, made the defense that there was not enough local skilled labor. Yet 7,000 Negroes had registered for defense training and been refused! Two years ago the Labor Division of W.P.A. estimated that 5,000 trained workers would be needed shortly at Mobile. As of April 1, 1942, Negroes were being refused training here although the vocational centers were running short of white candidates.⁵⁴ In Northern cities the situation is much better, although difficulties are reported from Kansas City and Omaha.⁵⁵

Thoughtful men and women, both North and South, have spoken sharply concerning the dangers to democracy in a policy in defense industries which shuts the door of employment in the face of Negro workmen. It was apparent, said Mrs. Roosevelt, speaking before the Virginia State College for Negroes, that colored people were not being given an equal opportunity in the industrial program.⁵⁶ Hon. Charles Poletti, lieutenant-governor of New York, remarked,

Democracy is being tested in the quality of opportunity and in the social and economic security enjoyed by all its citizens.⁵⁷

To give them (the Negroes) their opportunity will not only help them, but it will help the entire nation,

said former Governor Alfred E. Smith.⁵⁸

The people in my district are all up in arms about discrimination against Negroes in defense industries

declared Hon. Joseph A. Gavagan, who represents a largely Negro district in New York City.⁵⁹ Thomas J. Lyons, president of the New York State Federation of Labor, charged that those who practice racial discrimination "already have the seeds of Fascism in their breasts" and are "ripe for betrayal of democracy."⁶⁰ Said Rev. Dr. Anson Phelps-Stokes,

We wish . . . to support the recent efforts made . . . by the Administration through the Office of Production Management to speed up defense industries. One way of accomplishing this is by the larger employment of skilled Negro mechanics, especially in fields where there is a labor shortage. . . . An all-out defense effort cannot dis-

⁵⁴ *The Negro's War*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ National Urban League, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1941, 6:4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1941. *Vide. ibid.*, Jan. 26, 1941, 27:1; June 16, 1941, 6:6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1939, 22:8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, June 20, 1941, 11:3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Aug. 22, 1941, 6:5.

regard the Negro tenth of our population which is known for its loyalty.⁶¹

Mr. Arthur G. Brown, president of United Government Employees, told a congressional committee that \$500,000,000 could be taken off relief costs if defense contractors would employ Negroes on W.P.A. rolls.⁶²

We cannot afford to waste our labor resources by uneconomical production methods or by unintelligent and unfair restrictions against women or older workers, against Negroes or loyal aliens, or any other minority groups.⁶³

The Council for Democracy, headed by Raymond Gram Swing, issued a pamphlet, *The Negro and Defense*, charging that Negroes were treated as "second class citizens" in the armed forces and defense industries. The Council warned that if Negroes were allowed to become an "embittered and disillusioned people" they might become a danger in war time and a "fertile ground for subversive propaganda, agitation and unrest."⁶⁴

On April 11, 1941, Mr. Hillman sent a letter to all holders of defense contracts.

The Office of Production Management expects defense contractors to utilize all available labor resources before resorting to the recruiting of additional labor from outside their local areas. . . . In many localities, qualified and available Negro workers are either being restricted to unskilled jobs, or barred from defense employment entirely. . . . Such practices are extremely wasteful of our human resources and prevent a total effort for national defense. . . . All holders of defense contracts are urged to examine their employment and training policies at once to determine whether or not these policies make ample provision for the full utilization of available and competent Negro workers. Every available source of labor capable of producing defense materials must be tapped in the present emergency.⁶⁵

On the same day, Mr. Hillman created the Negro Employment and Training Branch in the Labor Division of O.P.M. and named Dr. Robert C. Weaver to the new unit.

In the meantime, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, conceived the idea of a march of 50,000 Negroes to Washington as a dramatic protest against racial

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1941, 19:4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, May 13, 1941, 13:2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 10, 1942, 18:8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1941, 20:3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Apr. 12, 1941, 8:6.

discrimination in a professed democracy. The march was set for July 1. When Fiorello LaGuardia, still in charge of the Office of Civilian Defense, asked him to call it off, Randolph refused. It was not until the White House promised to intervene that the proposed march was cancelled.⁶⁶

On June 12, 1941, President Roosevelt sent a memorandum to William S. Knudsen and Sidney Hillman calling on O.P.M. to take immediate steps to secure the employment of workers without discrimination on account of race, religion or national origin.

No nation combating the increasing threat of totalitarianism can afford arbitrarily to exclude large segments of its population from its defense industries. . . . Even more important is it for us to strengthen our unity and morale by refuting at home the very theories which we are fighting abroad.⁶⁷

When there was still no indication of a disposition on the part of industry or labor to modify traditional policies, the President, on June 25, issued executive order No. 8802.

There is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of consideration of race, creed, color or national origin. . . . It is the duty of employers and of labor organizations . . . to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in the defense industry without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin.⁶⁸

A Committee on Fair Employment Practice was organized in O.P.M. On September 6 the President instructed the heads of departments and government agencies to hire without regard to "creed, race, or religion," and particularly to give the Negroes an opportunity to get a fair share of jobs, including those relating to national defense.⁶⁹

But it takes more than executive orders to change racial attitudes of long standing. In September, 1941, the United States Bureau of Employment Security made a survey of selected defense industries to discover the number of job openings expected during the next six months and for how many of them Negroes, if available, would be considered. The survey revealed that out of 282,245 prospective openings, 144,583 (51 per cent) were barred to Negroes as a matter of policy. Of the 83,000 unskilled jobs, 35,000 were closed

⁶⁶ The Negro's War, *op. cit.*; Lester B. Granger, "The President, the Negro, and Defense," *Opportunity*, July, 1941, 204-7.

⁶⁷ *New York Times*, June 16, 1941, 6:6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, June 26, 1941, 12:3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Sept. 7, 1941, 38:1.

to Negroes. There was small difference between Northern and Southern labor policies. Out of 17,435 defense jobs in Texas, 9,117 were closed to Negroes. But in Michigan the figure was 22,042 out of 26,904 in Indiana 9,331 out of 9,979; in Ohio 29,242 out of 34,861. These answers were given at a time when the labor shortage was already beginning to be felt, and two months after the President had called for the abolition of discrimination in war industries!⁷⁰ In the spring of 1942 the Labor Division of the War Production Board made a survey of 750 selected defense plants. They were primarily large firms located in areas where there were available supplies of Negro labor. The survey showed that most firms are now employing some Negroes, although in many cases the number is small or employment concentrated in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations.⁷¹

From a number of cities come reports of relaxing of restrictions practiced by trade unions against Negro labor. The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (CIO) worked out a plan for upgrading the jobs of Negro unionists so as to increase Negro employment in war plants where the union has influence. The National Maritime Union (CIO) made it possible for Negro unionists to sign for voyages on several lines without diserimination as to pay, work or living conditions. The Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (AFL) in New York City cooperated with the regional Labor Supply Committee in placing Negroes in war jobs. The United Automobile Workers (CIO) took disciplinary action against white unionists who opposed the employment of skilled Negro union workers. Following an order from the Fair Employment Practice Committee, the International Association of Machinists, which bars Negroes from membership in almost every local, adjusted its closed shop agreement with the Consolidated Aircraft plant at San Diego, and approved the employment of qualified Negro machinists. The Cleveland local of this union has admitted some Negroes to union membership.⁷²

The first major increase in employment incident to national defense occurred in the construction of army cantonments, airports, arsenals and manufacturing plants. Many of the new and expanded camps were in the South. The most important single skill was carpentry. Here was a demand for a type of skill which many Negroes

⁷⁰ The Negro's War, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ Robert C. Weaver, "With the Negro's Help," *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1942.

⁷² National Urban League, *op. cit.*, 4.

were well qualified to perform. But most of the contractors were using union workers, and there were only small Negro locals in the areas from which labor could be recruited for this construction. However, more than 2,500 Negro carpenters were employed in cantonment construction in the South. At Fort Jackson, South Carolina, at the peak of activity, some 600 colored carpenters, 50 Negro painters, and many Negro cement finishers were employed. At Fort Croft, South Carolina, 300 Negro carpenters were employed. In addition, about 90 per cent of the workers used in the trowel trades were colored men. At Camp Robinson, Arkansas, there was some hesitancy on the part of the contractor to employ Negroes. He ultimately employed 3,331. In construction at Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1,000 colored workers were employed. Some 300 were working on the construction of the Army Hospital at New Orleans. Still others were found at Fort Benning and Fort Wheeler, Georgia; Fort Blanding, Florida; Fort Riley, Missouri; Fort Meade, Maryland; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Fort Monroe, Virginia. Many colored carpenters and skilled workers have been employed in cantonment construction outside the South, although there have been charges of discrimination. Perhaps the most unsatisfactory situations have occurred at Great Lakes Training Station and an ordnance plant which was being constructed in Illinois. Here Negroes have not been used to any extent in skilled building trades other than as carpenters, cement finishers and to some extent brick-layers and masons.⁷³

Of the war industries, shipbuilding is providing most jobs for Negroes; steel and foundries are second. The rapidly expanding aviation industry, hard pressed for labor, is increasing its use of Negroes.

Negroes have long been used in shipyards. During World War I, a gang of Negro pile drivers established a new world's record at Philadelphia, and at Sparrow's Point a colored riveter broke the existing record. In September, 1940, the United States Navy Yards employed approximately 6,000 Negroes. A year later the number had risen to 14,000. In December, 1941, private yards employed 6,952. By April, 1942, the number had risen to 12,820.⁷⁴ The Newport News Shipbuilding Company in Virginia has raised the number of its Negro employees from 3,000 to over 5,000. The Sun Ship-

⁷³ Robert C. Weaver, *Employment Trends in National Defense*, i, 18-22; Lester B. Granger, "Report on Defense," *Opportunity*, Feb., 1941, 48.

⁷⁴ *Employment Security Review*, July, 1942, 10; Robert C. Weaver, *Racial Trends in National Defense*, i, 17; ii, 4.

building and Dry Dock Company of Chester, Pennsylvania, built a new shipyard to employ 9,000 workers, which it manned with an all-Negro force.⁷⁵ Most of the yards hesitate to employ Negroes in some of the skilled callings where the union hold is strong. In one Southern city two large shipbuilding companies, which now employ Negroes in unskilled and semi-skilled capacities, report a scarcity of shipyard workers. There are 6,000 Negro workers available in the active file of the United States Employment Service in that city. Yet local school authorities hesitate to train them because, they say, "there is no demand for such workers." In three other Southern centers little or no training is being offered to relatively large numbers of available Negro workers. Instead, workers are being imported from other areas. The Andrew Higgins Industries of New Orleans, however, has worked out plans for manning two entire assembly lines with black labor.⁷⁶ The employment of Negroes in the Pacific Coast shipyards is a new development. Closed shop agreements with the A. F. of L. metal trades union present problems in the San Francisco-Oakland area. The shipfitters' union is accepting Negro members,⁷⁷ but at the time this is written the machinists' union has refused to clear Negro mechanics.

Negroes have been employed at the Lackawanna plant of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation since World War I. Today they constitute about 20 per cent of the labor force at that plant. Their presence is a refutation of the oft-repeated contention that white workers will not work with Negroes. They have been absorbed into the union. Seven or eight per cent of them are skilled workers; about forty per cent are semi-skilled.⁷⁸ About one-third of the steel workers at Baltimore are Negroes.⁷⁹ The iron and steel mills of Tennessee are using them in large numbers. There is a heavy concentration in the "hot" jobs of the foundry where they are used as molders and iron pourers. Despite the shortage of molders and the availability of Negro labor, Chicago foundries are using few Negroes.⁸⁰

Except for a few unskilled jobs, Negroes were excluded from the aviation industry until very recently. The Glenn L. Martin Company at Baltimore, with \$400,000,000 in defense contracts and

⁷⁵ New York *Times*, May 27, 1942, 43:3.

⁷⁶ National Urban League, *op. cit.*, 4.

⁷⁷ Weaver, *op. cit.*, ii, 4.

⁷⁸ Weaver, "With the Negro's Help," *op. cit.*

⁷⁹ Edward S. Lewis, "Defense Problems of Baltimore Negroes," *Opportunity*, Aug., 1941, 244:6.

⁸⁰ Weaver, *op. cit.*, i, 23.

18,000 workers, did not employ a single Negro in its plant.⁸¹ Boeing agreed to accept them if they would belong to Aeronautical Mechanics' Union No. 751. This union excludes Negroes. The Vultee Aircraft Corporation also had a closed shop agreement with the Machinists' Union. Mr. H. K. Kindelberger, president of North American Aviation, Inc., declared,

Negroes will be considered only as janitors and in other similar capacities. . . . Regardless of their training as aircraft workers, we will not employ them in the North American plant.

In May, 1941, there were nine Negroes employed as lavatory janitors at Consolidated. The only firm building war planes which employed even a handful of skilled Negro workers was the Douglas Aircraft Corporation.

But in April, 1942, 5,286 Negroes were employed in forty-nine aircraft plants, many of them in production capacities.⁸² The list includes Glenn L. Martin, Lockheed-Vega, Curtiss-Wright and Wright Aeronautical, North American, Douglas, Consolidated, Bell, Brewster, Republic and Fairchild. At a number of plants the unions are inducting them into membership, notwithstanding a "white" cause in the ritual. While nearly every aircraft company now employs some Negro labor, there are some in which the figures are so small as to constitute only a "token" compliance with the President's executive order.

In order to supply explosives, powder and small arms for a rapidly expanding army, scores of ordnance plants are now under construction or operation. A report of the National Urban League declares that there are 3,400 Negro workers at the Kingsbury Ordnance Plant at Laporte, Indiana, of whom 2,500 are in semi-skilled operations. At the Twin City Ordnance Plant of Minneapolis and St. Paul, they are used in all types of jobs.⁸³ A Missouri plant will employ 4,000 Negroes at peak of production.⁸⁴ The older munitions plants are increasing the job opportunities for colored workers. The Winchester Arms plant at New Haven has increased the number of Negro workers from a relatively few to 1,300.⁸⁵ Colt Patent Firearms Company of Hartford has increased its Negro payroll from 16 to 340.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Edward S. Lewis, *op. cit.*

⁸² *Employment Security Review*, July, 1942, 10; Weaver, "With the Negro's Help," *op. cit.*

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, 3.

⁸⁴ *Employment Security Review*, July, 1942, 10.

⁸⁵ Weaver, "With the Negro's Help," *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ *New York Times*, May 3, 1942, 42:7.

This is a war of material. In such a war machine tools are vital. At the beginning of the defense program, there were few Negro toolmakers, and not a large number of Negro machinists. The labor unions concerned in this field had lily-white standards, and the Negroes who received machine shop training under the defense program had difficulties in securing employment. Most plants in this category now employ Negro workers, although the number is generally small. The bulk of employment is concentrated in the smaller firms.⁸⁷

There has been extensive upgrading of skilled and semi-skilled Negro workers by former automobile plants now engaged in war production. The Chrysler Tank Arsenal, the Kelsey Hayes Wheel Company, the Buick Corporation, the Oldsmobile Company, the Murray Corporation, the Briggs Manufacturing Company, and the Packard Motor Company, are among the firms reporting such changes. A manufacturer of radio equipment at Indianapolis has begun to employ Negroes as draftsmen and inspectors. The A. O. Smith Corporation and the Julius Heil Company of Milwaukee employed no Negroes until recently. Now the former has close to 200, the latter 70.⁸⁸

Outside the defense field there has been a noticeable improvement in employment. This is reflected in an increasing return to what are considered "traditional" Negro jobs. Apparently the white men who held these places have found better opportunities in defense employment and Negroes have been called in to fill the vacancies. Once again colored men appear in large numbers as janitors, delivery boys, truck drivers, hotel men, automobile washers and domestic service. It is significant that these are better jobs today than they were when Negroes were displaced from them during the depression. As "white" jobs the wages were higher, and the current labor shortage makes it impossible to return to the former wage levels. The Fair Labor Standards Act is not without its effect.

It is significant, too, that the increase in Negro employment is not confined to unskilled or semi-skilled labor. Negroes are being used on production jobs from which they were formerly excluded. They are operating boring mills, punch presses, lathes, and high-powered precision tools. They are welders, screw machine operators, and electricians. They are using blueprints. Some have found their way into research laboratories. Occasionally, they are gang

⁸⁷ Weaver, "With the Negro's Help, II, 7-8.

⁸⁸ National Urban League, *op. cit.*, 4.

bosses and supervisors. That more Negroes need training for skilled jobs is obvious. As Dr. Weaver says,

Training does not assure employment but, in a labor market where skilled men are and will be scarce, training is a much more important factor for placement than in ordinary times.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 10.

CHAPTER VII

THE WOMAN WORKER

A serious problem connected with Negro labor is that of its womanhood. Unlike her white sister, marriage for a Negro woman does not mean the end of gainful employment. The wages which her husband earns are usually insufficient to support a family. That is one reason why a very much larger portion of Negro women than of whites are gainfully employed. To these must be added the widows, deserted mothers, unmarried mothers, and otherwise unsupported women who must compete with men in the labor market. The last available census (1930) shows that 38.9 per cent of the Negro women are breadwinners as against only 20.3 per cent of white women.¹

The greater number of these women are in domestic service. Indeed, prior to the World War Negro women were restricted almost entirely to this type of work. Out of 2,857 women wage earners in Philadelphia, DuBois found 1,234 day workers, janitresses, seamstresses and cooks and 1,262 servants.² In New York City, Dr. Haynes found 89.3 per cent of the colored female workers engaged in domestic service.³ Although changes have come about in recent years, domestic service still claims the largest number of colored woman workers, 62.6 per cent being so employed in 1930.⁴ Most of these girls are employed in boarding houses or private families as waitresses, cooks, laundresses, child nurses, or maids of all work. Tens of thousands of Negro women in domestic service today have high school diplomas; hundreds have college degrees. They are capable of learning skilled and semi-skilled operations which would contribute to our war effort. The opposition to their employment is based partly on the theory that they ought not to be used outside of unskilled fields until all available white labor is employed.

While the Negro domestic receives higher wages in Northern cities than in Southern, the remuneration is apt to prove inadequate. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations (1922) listed

¹ *Fifteenth Census of the United States, Occupation Statistics*, 26.

² *The Philadelphia Negro*, 103.

³ *The Negro at Work in New York City*, 72.

⁴ U. S. Bur. of Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920-32*, 290.

eighty-one orders for maids in private families at wages from \$8 to \$18 a week, the average being \$12.84.⁵ Fifty-eight Negro women covered in a survey in Philadelphia (1932) received average weekly wages of \$14.50.⁶ A compilation of household employment data for the South in 1934, in which some 26 Y.W.C.A. local associations co-operated, showed that the average weekly wage for Negro workers was \$6.17 and that the average work week was 66 hours. A survey of thirty-three Northern counties in Mississippi conducted under the auspices of the National Recovery Administration showed that the wages of Negro domestics usually amounted to less than \$2 a week.⁷ In Washington, D. C., the weekly cash wages (1940) ran from \$3.50 to \$18.75, the median weekly wages for Negro women being \$8.85. The median working day for this group was 11 hours 33 minutes.⁸ Negro domestics in Baltimore (1940) reported wages ranging from less than \$2 to slightly over \$18; 15 per cent reported less than \$4.^{8a} Meals and a room are usually included at these figures. But the average colored female servant prefers to sleep under her own roof. The large number of married women among them goes far to account for this preference, and the desire for greater freedom outside working hours probably influences many others.

Many Negro women not employed in residential service are doing the same type of work elsewhere. We find them in stores where they sweep and dust, scrub floors, operate elevators and take charge of cloak and toilet rooms. Sometimes they are stock girls and cafeteria waitresses. Here the hours are more regular than in residential service although the pay is equally scanty and there is no hope of advancement. A colored girl almost never gets an opportunity to occupy a clerical or sales position. The position of maid in a theater or on a train is highly prized, for while the wage is small there is a chance that the added tips will amount to more in the long run.

From 1910 to 1920 the number of colored females employed in domestic and personal service fell about 60,000, but the census

⁵ *The Negro in Chicago*, 370.

⁶ Women's Bur., Bull. No. 93, *Household Employment in Philadelphia*, 52. During the depression years it was customary for Negro women to congregate on certain street corners in Brooklyn and the Bronx. White women who visited these "slave markets" to secure women for housework exploited the surplus by offering employment to the lowest bidder. Fifteen cents an hour was said to be the prevailing wage. *New York Times*, May 19, 1938, 23:8; Dec. 1, 1939, 25:2; Feb. 27, 1941, 21:1; Mar. 2, 1941, 4:1.

⁷ Jean Collier Brown, *The Negro Woman Worker*, Women's Bur. Bull. No. 165, p. 3.

⁸ Grace Fox, *Women Domestic Workers in Washington, D. C.*, 7, 9.

^{8a} *Woman Worker*, Mar., 1942, 13.

of 1930 shows an increase of about 360,000 over that of ten years earlier. For many years there has been a growing aversion to domestic service among Negro women. The falling off in 1920 is probably evidence of an instinctive reaction to abandon as quickly as possible a field so long associated with slavery. The demands of industry with shorter hours and free Sundays were also important factors. It is apparent that many women who held other jobs during the war have now returned to domestic service; while some who did not have to work at that time, possibly because of the higher wages received by their husbands, have sought this type of employment. In 1930 over 50,000 Negro women were employed in power laundries and cleaning and dyeing establishments, more than twice as many as in 1920. About 13,000 were employed as barbers, hairdressers and manicurists, over 11,000 as charwomen and cleaners, and 16,000 as nurses (untrained) and midwives.⁹

The second largest field of employment for colored women is agriculture. Although there has been a steady trend away from the farm ever since 1890, 26.9 per cent of the Negro women gainfully occupied are still in agriculture.¹⁰ Most of these are eking out a bare existence on Southern farms. The female field hand has physical strength. She can do almost any kind of work which a man can do. She can handle a two-horse plow; she pulls fodder and clears new ground. She can pick from 85 to 110 pounds of cotton in a day. At noon she will hurry home to cook the meal over a blazing hearth fire and then hurry back to the field to work in the heat of a broiling sun. Almost the only pleasures which such women have are the church meeting or when the funeral of some friend furnishes a social outlet.

Prior to the World War, the census figures show that the number of colored females employed in industry was negligible. In 1910 manufacturing and mechanical industries, which employed 1,366,959 women, employed only 16,835 colored women. Of these, 10,672 (63 per cent) were employed in tobacco factories, and 6,163 (37 per cent) were returned as general laborers and "not specified" in manufactures.¹¹ The labor shortage during the war years resulted in the employment of larger numbers of Negro women as well as the opening of new industries to them. The census of 1920 shows 104,983 Negro women employed in manufacturing

⁹ Mary Anderson, Director of Woman's Bureau, "The Employment and Unemployment of Negro Women," address delivered at the Conference on the Present Economic Status of the Negro, Washington, May 11-13, 1933, *Ms.*

¹⁰ *Negroes in the United States, op. cit.*, 290.

¹¹ Women's Bureau, Bull. No. 20, *Negro Women in Industry*, 5.

and mechanical pursuits.¹² A New York study, made in 1918, found Negro women in 217 establishments.¹³ A similar study at Philadelphia disclosed the employment of about 2,800 Negro women in 108 factories of that city.¹⁴ In both these surveys colored women were found in largest numbers in the garment trades, although they were also found in paper box factories, munition factories, and in the manufacture of textiles, tobacco, candy, glass, clothing, leather goods, the fashioning of hats and dyeing of furs. In 1920 the Women's Bureau secured data from 150 plants employing 11,812 colored female workers.¹⁵ Between 1918 and 1925 surveys of women in industry were made in fifteen states, and in 1929 much of the material from these surveys was compiled in a special bulletin entitled *Negro Women in Industry in Fifteen States*. In this case, 12,123 colored women workers in 251 manufacturing plants were covered. The industries in which the largest number of Negro women were found were tobacco, food, textiles and wood.

The tobacco industry was the first to be opened to Negro women and furnishes more with employment than any other industry. The census of 1930 showed nearly 15,000 Negro women employed in tobacco factories. It is the only Southern industry which employs large numbers. They have a monopoly of the heavy and dusty labor in the preparation of tobacco for manufacturing, more than half being engaged in the processes known as "stemming and stripping." Negro women were reported in five food industries: slaughtering and meat packing, canning and preserving of fruit and vegetables, candy, bakeries and nuts. The textile industries which employed them were cotton and knitting mills and the manufacture of hosiery. In the wood products factories they were employed in plants making wooden boxes, vegetable crates, egg cases, furniture, matches, brooms, gunstocks, ice cream freezers, buckets, screen doors, and in veneer mills. In addition Negro women were found in glass, munition plants, rubber plants, paper novelties, paper boxes, leather products, embroideries, lamp shades, artificial flowers, millinery, toys, bedsprings, mattresses, hardware,

¹² Women's Bureau, Bull. No. 70, *Negro Women in Industry in Fifteen States*, 1.

¹³ Consumers' League of the City of New York, *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*.

¹⁴ Consumers' League of Eastern Pennsylvania, *Colored Women as Industrial Workers in Philadelphia*.

¹⁵ Women's Bur., No. 20, *op. cit.*

chemicals, cushions and the needle trades.¹⁶

As in the case of Negro men, the women almost invariably entered industry through the least skilled occupations. In the textile mills large numbers were employed in sweeping and cleaning or the removal of lint from machines. About one-third of the meat packers covered by the Women's Bureau were working with casings and chitterlings. That is, they were emptying the intestines of their contents and preparing them as coverings for sausages. Some singed hair, took out brains, hearts, lungs, livers, shaved ears, and skinned tongues. A few were on the killing floor. In the bakeries, canneries and other food establishments, they were washing cans and dishes. Over 70 per cent of those in the canning industry were pitting or peeling fruit. Most of those employed in nut factories were picking out kernels. They sorted rags in the paper factories and stacked lumber in the wood industries. Over half the Negro women reported by clothing establishments were cleaning and pressing clothing. A good many were performing operations connected with the final preparation for the market: inspecting, counting, grading, weighing, putting on labels, wrapping and packing. Most of those in the candy industry were wrapping and packing candies and lifting heavy trays from the candy machine to the wrapping table. In the bakeries, only seven women were found who made pies, two who prepared fillings, two who iced cakes, and one who topped pies. All these were employed in the Southern states. A considerable number operated various kinds of machines. Many of these involved simple operations like a foot press. There were some saw girls in the wooden manufactures. Some of the women in tobacco factories used a stemming machine. Nearly two-thirds of the metal workers were machine or press operators. About one-third of those in clothing factories used sewing machines, although there is no data to indicate how many of these were power machines. Work on metal presses, power sewing machines, and the loopers and seamers in the hosiery

¹⁶ Women's Bur., No. 20, 7, 14, 55; No. 29, 95; No. 32, 84; No. 34, 2, 25; No. 35, 6, 39; No. 39, 2; No. 44, 101; No. 58, 40; No. 55, 2; No. 62, 13; No. 77, 21; Pennsylvania Dept. of Welfare, *Negro Survey of Pennsylvania*, 20; Consumers' League of Eastern Pennsylvania, *op. cit.*; Consumers' League of New York City, *op. cit.*, 14; Geo. E. Haynes, "Effect of War Conditions on Negro Labor," *Annals of Amer. Acad.*, Feb., 1919, 8:299 312; *Negro at Work in New York City*, 44-6, 89, 125-7; *Negro in Chicago*, 363, 367, 378-85, 402, 464, 625; *Negro in Detroit*, sec. iii; Helen Brooks Irvin, "Conditions in Industry as they affect Negro Women," *Nat. Conf. Social Work*, 1919, 521-4; William H. Richardson, "North Carolina's Recent Progress," *Review of Reviews*, Dec., 1923, 68:621-31; *Norfolk's 36%*; *Occupations and General Economic and Social Status of the 64,000 Citizens of Norfolk, Virginia*.

mills were some of the most skilled machine processes in which Negro women were found.¹⁷

Whether or not they were advanced from menial work to skilled or semi-skilled processes seems to be largely a matter of the opportunity the employer was willing to give. In some cases advancement was permitted; more often they were not allowed to enter the skilled processes or were admitted with reluctance. A few were found in supervisory posts. Two of these were in pickle factories, and seven in a plant making house furnishings. One Negro woman was superintendent in a nut sorting plant, another was employment superintendent in a shirt factory, and a third attained the position of forewoman in a candy factory.¹⁸

Working conditions varied considerably. In many cases no provision was made for the comfort of the new workers. Toilet and washing facilities were apt to be unsatisfactory, while rest rooms and lunch rooms were the exception. In many cases there was poor ventilation, poor light, lack of ordinary cleanliness, and unsatisfactory seating facilities. Eighteen establishments had adequate and sanitary first-aid dispensaries under the supervision of trained nurses, but 132 either had no facilities for the treatment of illness and injuries, or only the slightest.¹⁹

Frequently Negro women were working on processes which white women would refuse to perform.

They were replacing boys at cleaning window shades, work which necessitates constant standing and reaching. They were taking men's places in the dyeing of furs, highly objectionable and injurious work involving standing, reaching, the use of a weighted brush, and ill-smelling dye. In a mattress factory they were found replacing men at "baling," working in pairs, wrapping five mattresses together, and sewing them up ready for shipment. These women had to bend constantly and lift clumsy 160-pound bales.²⁰

Sometimes, as in a paper bag factory, they worked amid terrific noise, or, as in the hosiery mills, their work required long standing and subjected the workers to eye strain. Conditions were at their worst in the tobacco industry where the air was heavy with dust, and in the cement factories where the workers were forced to breathe impure air.

¹⁷ Women's Bur., No. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28-9; Consumers' League of Eastern Pennsylvania, *Report*, 1919-20.

¹⁹ Women's Bur., No. 20, 23-30; *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*, 17-19.

²⁰ *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*, 17.

A study of the hours of labor and wages indicate definite tendencies toward exploitation. In the first survey of the Women's Bureau, about one-third of the women (3,840) were working ten hours a day or more, while 3,239 (27.4 per cent) were working nine hours a day.²¹ In the fifteen states covered in the later bulletin, only 16.7 per cent of the women studied had an eight-hour day, and 21 per cent worked over 55 hours a week.²² Industries with the shortest schedules were glass products where 72 per cent of the workers had an eight-hour day or less. Textiles, tobacco and wood products required a ten-hour day for 25 per cent, 48 per cent, and 76 per cent, respectively, of their Negro women workers.²³ All employees in the peanut industry work in excess of ten hours.²⁴ We must remember that the working day of the majority of Negro women workers was lengthened beyond these hours because of home duties in addition to factory work.

Wages were generally low. The Minimum Wage Board of the District of Columbia (1920) set \$16.50 a week as the lowest sum on which a woman could support herself in health and decency, and the Consumers' League's estimate for Philadelphia was a few cents over this figure. More than half the Negro women employed in Philadelphia received less than \$12 a week, and 74.5 per cent fell below \$15.²⁵ In Detroit, \$12 a week seemed to be the prevailing wage.²⁶ In Chicago, wages generally ran from \$12 to \$15 a week, although a few shops paid more.²⁷ Over half the women studied in New York City were earning \$10 a week or less. Some were receiving as low as \$5, and 76 per cent were not paid over \$12 a week.²⁸ In 1931 the Women's Bureau secured wage data from 3,141 Negro women in manufacturing industries in ten states. In nine of these states the median weekly earnings ranged from \$4.89 in South Carolina to \$8.92 in Ohio, and in eight of these states less than \$8 represented the weekly earnings of from 40 to more than 90 per cent of the women.²⁹ The highest median weekly wages were paid to sausage workers (\$22.35), tobacco feeders (\$14), tobacco twisters (\$12.60) and oyster shuckers (\$11.50); while the

²¹ Women's Bur., No. 20, 17.

²² Women's Bur., No. 70, 33.

²³ Mary Anderson, *Negro Woman Worker*, *Ms.*

²⁴ Women's Bur., No. 20, 18.

²⁵ *Colored Women in Industry in Philadelphia*.

²⁶ Haynes, *Survey of Migrants in Detroit*, quoted by Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, 130.

²⁷ *Negro in Chicago*, 367, 383.

²⁸ *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*, 21.

²⁹ Women's Bur., No. 85, *Wages of Women in Thirteen States*, 14.

lowest median weekly wages were paid to tobacco bunchers (\$1.85), boxers and craters (\$3.75), clothing machine operators (\$3.80), tobacco pickers (\$7.30) and chicken pickers (\$7.75).³⁰ It is not surprising that some of these women resort to theft and prostitution.

The studies of the Women's Bureau reveal not only a low wage scale, but a wide difference in wage scale between Negro and white women workers. A bulletin issued by the United States Department of Labor discloses that the average wage for white women employed in laundries in Tennessee is \$8.30; while the average wage for colored women engaged in a similar task is only \$6.55.³¹ The study of the cigarette industry, in 1929 and 1930, shows the median weekly wage for Negro women cigar workers to be \$10.10, and for cigarette workers \$8. The corresponding medians for white women were \$16.30 and \$17.05, respectively.³² Such differences in wage scales appear to be typical.³³ There are some specialized trades which are better paid. According to Miss Kate Propert of the New York State Department of Labor, average weekly wages in 1939 included \$16.50 for hairdressers for a 30-hour week; \$14 for laundresses and confectioners; and a 40 cents per hour minimum in dry cleaning establishments.^{33a}

The seasonal character of many of the occupations in which Negro women are engaged still further depresses their actual earning power. The peanut and tobacco industries are subject to prolonged depressions each summer while the new crop is maturing. Fruit and vegetable canning is decidedly a seasonal industry. The toy industry is busiest just preceding Christmas, and the candy manufacturer has his heaviest trade at Christmas and Eastertide. At such seasons additional workers are taken on; in slack times the marginal workers take in washings, or do days work at house-cleaning and other odd jobs. Such work, however, is decidedly uncertain.

³⁰ Chas. S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 64.

³¹ *Opportunity*, July, 1927, 5:161.

³² Anderson, *The Negro Woman Worker*, Ms.

³³ Women's Bur., No. 20, 40; No. 22, 31; No. 35, 39; No. 56, 39-40; Cheyney, *Negro Women in Industry*, 40; Anetta Dieckmann, *Bulletin of the Consumers' League of Ohio; A Survey of Laundries and their Women Workers in Twenty-three Cities*, 63-85; *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*, 21; Women's Bur., No. 80, *Women in Florida Industries*, 7. A survey of various industries in Georgia (1938) reveals the following comparison between the wages of white and colored women: laundry and dry cleaning, \$11.78, \$8.46; textile mills, \$14.90, \$8.42; garment factories, \$14, \$9. *Opportunity*, Sept., 1939, 277.

^{33a} *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1939, 17:1.

The opinions of employers as to the desirability of colored workers varied widely.

Of thirty-four employers who expressed a definite opinion on this subject, fourteen said that they found the work of Negro women as satisfactory as other women workers, and three found their work better than that of the white women they were working with or had displaced. Of the seventeen employers who felt that the work of Negro women did not compare satisfactorily with that of white women, seven reported irregularity of attendance was the main cause for dissatisfaction, and seven others felt that the output of Negro women was less because they were slower workers.³⁴

In the New York survey we read,

About half the employers considered them as efficient as their white workers. These found them well-mannered and more courteous than the white girls, and found them steadier, although slower in movements. The other half considered them lazy, stupid, and unreliable, and declared that they would not have them if white girls were obtainable.³⁵

Reports to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations indicate that Negro women were generally satisfactory.³⁶ The employment manager of one large mail order house said,

We have been very favorably impressed The girls have made very rapid progress, in fact they surprised all of us.

From another mail order house in Chicago comes this testimonial.

The Negro girl is equal to the Italian or Bohemian in working ability and superior for executive work, such as instructing or supervising.

Her chief defect seems to be a matter of race sensitiveness.

The colored girl seems to suspect that her employer is going to put something over on her. She is suspicious of any whites that come in her vicinity and is ready to believe that any white person is prejudiced against her on account of race.³⁷

One serious defect was the lack of any means of training women without previous experience for their new duties. The Women's Bureau found training courses in twenty-five factories, and most of the managers in such factories had little difficulty with their workers.

³⁴ George E. Haynes, *The Negro at Work during the World War and during Reconstruction*, 130.

³⁵ *A New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*, 25.

³⁶ *The Negro in Chicago*, 625-6.

³⁷ *The Negro in Chicago*, 381-2; Cf. Women's Bur., No. 20, 47-8.

Five managers state that it took longer to break in a Negro than a white woman worker, but all concurred in thinking that she was just as good after she had been trained.³⁸

Since the World War the sphere of gainful activity of Negro women has been narrowly restricted. Despite the good showing during the war, most employers regarded them distinctly as marginal workers. They were hired only because of an acute labor shortage. As soon as possible after the signing of the armistice various industrial establishments began to weed out their Negro female workers. In 1922 the Women's Bureau found twenty industrial establishments in which they had been dismissed and forty others in which they had been reduced to less skilled processes than they had formerly performed.³⁹ In 1918, fifty-seven New York firms employing Negro women avowed their satisfaction and their intention of retaining them when the war emergency had ended. But by 1920 eleven of these establishments had dismissed their Negro women workers, and five had gone out of business.

These sixteen firms had employed 112 Negro women. The remaining forty-one establishments, which had employed 685 Negro women in 1918, were employing 395 Negro women in 1920, a reduction of 42 per cent.⁴⁰

One of the most pathetic figures in the Negro world is the young woman who, through high school or business college training, has fitted herself for work above the menial or unskilled level. Negro business men offer her what work they have, but their number is limited. Outside of that restricted field a taboo stands between her and a livelihood. Unless she elects to follow a prostitute's profession, her opportunities seem to be limited to washing dishes, peeling potatoes and similar work. The discouraging thing is that such jobs need no school training.

In the less crowded professional vocations the outlook is more cheerful. Here we find successful legal, medical and dental practitioners. Because the Negro is lowest in the economic scale, there is a demand for trained colored women in the profession of social work. Several Negro women are proprietors of dress making shops in the country's greatest shopping district. A number have their own millinery establishments, beauty shops and costuming parlors.

The chief upward step for women has been to positions as teachers, as graduate nurses doing both private nursing and public

³⁸ Women's Bur., No. 20, 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

health work, as beauty specialists and as teachers of music. Teachers find their chief opportunity in the South where they are employed in the separate Negro schools, although a considerable number are employed in New York City and other Northern cities with considerable Negro colonies. Negro nurses are in great demand in white homes, partly because they will do other tasks and partly because they demand smaller pay than white graduate nurses receive. While, therefore, discouragements confront the Negro woman who is a high school or college graduate, she has some opportunity to rise if she can secure educational advantages.

A small class of Negro women belong to a leisure group, touched but faintly by the hardships which affect their race. They are the wives and daughters of Negro business and professional men, an elite class of which the average white scarcely suspects the existence. They live in well-furnished homes, play golf and tennis, read good books, enjoy their social clubs, send their sons and daughters to Negro colleges and other high grade Northern institutions, visit Europe, and live very much as white women of the same class.

Like all marginal workers, Negro women have suffered severely during the unemployment crisis of the last several years. The special unemployment census taken by the Department of Labor in nineteen selected cities (Jan., 1931) gives a fairly definite idea of how they have been affected. In nine of these cities, including New York, 42 per cent of the Negro women workers were out of work as compared with 17 per cent of the American-born white women and 12 per cent of the foreign-born white women. The proportion ranged from 28.5 per cent in Brooklyn and Manhattan to 75 per cent in Detroit. In Chicago, Houston, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Cleveland over 40 per cent of the Negro women normally employed were jobless. In every case much smaller proportions of white women, both American and foreign-born, were thus affected.⁴¹

There are several factors which influence the situation. As already pointed out, in industry they are considered marginal workers. Last to be hired in time of labor shortage, they are first to be released in time of over-production. Furthermore, technological changes in industry have tended to eliminate the unskilled jobs, which undoubtedly affects many Negro women workers. Women employed in domestic service are indirectly affected by the

⁴¹ Anderson, The Employment and Unemployment of Negro Women, *Ms.*; Chas. S. Johnson, *The Economic Status of Negroes*, 17.

depression. When times become slack white families accustomed to employ domestic help either curtail the number or dismiss them altogether. Many women, accustomed to working outside the home, required the services of domestics; but, when these women lost their jobs, they were compelled to do their own cooking and cleaning. Thus another group of colored workers was thrown on the labor market. Thousands of white women, unemployed through the shutting down of industry, have turned to domestic service, thus flooding the field and giving the Negro woman hard competition.⁴² Even those colored women who managed to hold their jobs have suffered cruelly. For to them wage cuts meant that those who already lived below a decent living standard were compelled to live on a yet lower plane. As other members of the family lost jobs, their slender earnings had to be stretched until bare necessities of life could no longer be obtained.

One of the most outstanding features of the W.P.A. program was the offering to many colored women the first opportunity for employment in work other than domestic and personal service or in the cotton fields. Many were taught to cook and sew. In various communities they benefited from services they had never had before. Negro mothers could seek and hold jobs while their small children were carefully cared for in child-care centers. And now again the pressure of a war emergency forces us to consider the use of women in occupations outside their traditional sphere. From the point of view of production it is wise to use all available supplies of local labor before resorting to importation of workers. Negro women are anxious to participate in defense jobs. Firms like Curtiss-Wright and Lockheed-Vega are finding that by tapping early the vast supply of Negro women workers they are able to select those of superior ability who are displaying remarkable aptitude.

It is to be regretted that so many Negro women have to work. It explains in some measure the high rate of infant mortality. Deprived of maternal supervision, the children are left to their own devices during much of the day and this fact is not without its influence on the high percentage of juvenile delinquents among Negroes. The high rate of gainful employment explains yet another set of figures. In the Women's Bureau study No. 70, 3,048 women reported on their marital status. Of these 39.9 per cent were married, 29.8 per cent were widowed, separated or divorced, and 30.2 per cent were single.⁴³ Being economically independent,

⁴² Anderson.

⁴³ Women's Bur., No. 70, 52.

the colored woman has no compunctions about leaving her husband if he should turn out to be a bad bargain. These figures show that 60 per cent of the Negro women in this particular group were not living in a married state.

The census figures show a surplus of Negro women in most Northern cities. This is due to the prominence of domestic service opportunities. Since marriage is impossible for a large number of Negro women, social disorders result. These are accentuated by the temptations which surround the pretty domestic servant. Not only does she frequently have to face improper attitudes on the part of men in the homes where she works, but when she lives off the premises she must go home after dark, often through unlighted streets, without escort or protection. The high rate of illegitimacy among Negro children has advertised the woman of this race as having lower sex standards. This is not necessarily true, for sex irregularities are a result of sociological and economic conditions.

The outlook for the woman of color is not hopeful. No other woman among civilized people is so little protected or evokes so little chivalry from the men of her race. Pushed into menial callings from which she is forbidden to rise, condemned to long hours at low pay, she has little opportunity for happiness. Yet she preserves a cheerful spirit and amiable temper, drudging through life that the women of other groups may have leisure time.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEGRO IN BUSINESS

Before the war planters tried, as far as possible, to make their plantations independent of the outside world. Accordingly, they selected the most capable slave youths to train as artisans. In almost all the cities of the ante-bellum South could be found Negro barbers, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics and textile workers. By dint of hard work, some of these managed to secure their freedom and continued in business as the manager of their own shop. At this period the barbering business of the South was practically a monopoly in the hands of Negroes. Some free artisans made and sold shoes and clothing. Others managed hotels and restaurants. One Charleston Negro built up such a profitable sail-making business that he purchased slaves to assist him. In comparison, the Northern states presented the Negro with scanty business opportunities. In most communities the number of their race was too few to establish a group economy, and white competition and the hostility of labor unions combined to crowd the Northern Negro backward into personal service and other menial occupations. Yet there were a few Negro business men in the North.

When the war clouds rolled away, many of the plantation artisans set up their shops at the crossroads and villages throughout the South. Often they were assisted and patronized by their former masters. Others drifted away to the larger cities where they worked as free mechanics or became absorbed into the ranks of unskilled labor. Lack of capital was one serious obstacle to the development of Negro business. The attitude of the younger Negroes was another. Generally speaking, they manifested an aversion to things mechanical and did not choose to follow their fathers' callings. Various Southern states made attempts to establish apprentice systems, but they met with little success. To the mind of the Negro, apprenticeship was a substitute for slavery. Officers of the Freedmen's Bureau were apt to sympathize with this view. This attitude was probably more influential in the displacement of the Negro artisan than any other single factor. Certain it is that the number of Negro artisans fell off as the old plantation

mechanics died, and their trades passed into the hands of white men. In 1898 the Commissioner of Labor of the State of Virginia wrote:

There are fewer skilled among them now than there were before the war proportional to numbers and opportunities.¹

In this respect, Virginia was typical of the entire South.

In the meantime, a strong tendency toward group economy developed in those cities, North and South, in which there were considerable Negro colonies. The opportunities were perhaps greater in the South where enforced segregation compelled the Negroes, to some extent, to build up their own economic institutions. Down to the World War progress was slow despite the efforts of the National Negro Business League, which Booker T. Washington founded in 1900. The large Negro centers which sprang up in the North as a consequence of the migration demanded all kinds of services. Since many white businesses serve Negroes reluctantly, if at all, the Negro turned increasingly to the men and women of his own race. Negro business sections became fairly common.

According to Dr. Abram Lincoln Harris, the financial interests of the Negro group in the United States are cared for by twelve banks.² The first bank for Negroes was the Free Labor Bank, established at New Orleans in 1864 by Gen. N. P. Banks, for the purpose of receiving the deposits of freedmen and inculcating ideals of thrift. Military savings banks were established at Beaufort, South Carolina; Norfolk, Virginia, and other army posts where large numbers of Negro soldiers were assembled. At the suggestion of John W. Alvord, Congress, in 1865, incorporated the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company. New York City became the headquarters of the bank and branches were established in thirty-four cities, mostly in the South. For five years the bank was conducted along conservative lines. But unwise speculations in real estate and gross irregularities on the part of the officials ultimately wrecked the bank (1874), involving a loss of nearly \$3,000,000 in deposits. The failure of the Freedmen's Savings Bank dampeden the desire of the Negroes to invest their savings in banks. It was more than a decade before confidence was

¹ *First Annual Report of Commissioner of Labor of Virginia, 1898-9*, pt. 2.

² *The Negro as Capitalist*, 48-9; Florence Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 13.

even partially restored.³ The first bank organized by Negroes was the Capital Savings Bank of Washington, which opened its doors in 1888. For sixteen years it had a prosperous existence. But it finally failed (1904), due largely to misappropriation of funds by one of its officials.⁴

There is a widespread feeling that white banks discriminate against Negro business. Said the *Crisis*,

There are white banks in Texas, in Atlanta, and in black Harlem that, with millions of Negro money, would sooner lend to the devil than to a Negro business enterprise.⁵

To what extent this attitude, if it exists, is due to racial prejudice and to what extent to the difficulty of Negro business men in furnishing required collateral we do not know. It is probable that the high cost of handling Negro deposit accounts, where the monthly balances are low, may have something to do with the discouragement of Negro business by white bankers. At any rate, Negro leaders have pointed out the necessity of establishing their own banks in order to meet this need.

From 1888 to 1934 at least 134 banks were organized by Negroes, not including credit unions, industrial loan associations, or building and loan associations.⁶ But these were of little service to the great mass of Negroes whose need of credit was matched by lack of adequate security. To meet the needs of industrial workers who wish to borrow money and who do not have marketable collateral, the People's Finance Corporation of St. Louis was organized in 1922. This was the first bank of the type to cater to Negroes, but other industrial loan companies have since been established at Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Newark and elsewhere.⁷ Several fraternal orders have established banks. Among them are the True Reformers Bank and the St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank, both at Richmond, the Bank of Galilean Fishermen at Hampton, Virginia, and the Sons and Daughters of Peace Penny, Nickel and Dime Bank at Newport News. These last did not attempt commercial banking on a large scale, but were concerned chiefly with the safe-keeping of funds for their orders. Some of the Negro banks have

³ Arnett G. Lindsay, "The Negro in Banking," *J. of Negro Hist.*, Apr., 1929, 14:156-201; Walter L. Fleming, *The Freedmen's Savings Bank*.

⁴ Lindsay, *op. cit.*

⁵ *Crisis*, Jan., 1921, 21:102.

⁶ Abram L. Harris, *op. cit.*, 48.

⁷ Lindsay, *op. cit.*

achieved more than local fame because of the dominant personalities around whom they were built. Such were the Alabama Penny Savings Bank of Birmingham, founded in 1890 by Rev. W. R. Pettiford; and the St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank of Richmond, founded in 1903 by Mrs. Maggie L. Walker, America's first woman bank president. While they lasted the most important Negro banks were the Douglass National Bank and Jesse Binga's State Bank, both in Chicago. The Douglass National Bank was the largest bank owned and operated by Negroes, having resources of more than \$2,000,000. Binga's State Bank was almost as large. Together they controlled 36 per cent of the Negro banking capital in the United States. The Dunbar National Bank of New York City is not a Negro bank. It was a \$1,900,000 institution, established by the Rockefeller interests (Sept., 1928) for the Harlem area, and was completely staffed by black men.*

Writing in 1928, Dr. Monroe N. Work declared that at that time eighty-two Negro banks had failed. In some cases failure was due to dishonesty; in others, bad management or speculation was responsible. The Mutual Bank and Trust Co. of Chattanooga failed in 1903 because of misappropriation of funds. After more than twenty years of successful operation, the Bank of the True Reformers, often spoken of as the "Gibraltar of Negro Business," failed in 1910. It was mismanaged and some of its officers were criminally negligent. Pettiford's bank was prosperous for many years, but in 1905 rumors that the teller was short in his accounts started a run which could not be stopped, and the bank went into liquidation. In 1922 the Mutual Savings Bank, of Portsmouth, Virginia, closed its doors after the government navy yard shut down, throwing thousands of colored wage earners out of work with resultant heavy withdrawals of savings. The depression years, which played havoc with even the most substantial financial enterprises, took a heavy toll among Negro banking institutions. There were thirty Negro banks in 1927; there are twelve today. The Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company of Norfolk failed to reopen after President Roosevelt's bank holiday. The Prudential Bank of Washington got into difficulties in 1932, and was taken over by the Industrial Savings Bank. Two years later frozen assets brought Industrial Savings to disaster. Incidentally, there was a shortage of \$95,000 in Prudential's books. In Chicago, the Douglass National Bank and Binga's State Bank went down in the crash, pulling a number of other institutions with them. The cause of the

*It was disestablished in 1938.

failure of the Douglass Bank was the large volume of loans on securities which could not be easily liquidated—loans on real estate, loans to churches and fraternal societies, and heavy loans secured by stocks of the Victory Life Insurance Company. The writer knows of but two banks, owned and operated by Negroes, which have enjoyed a quarter of a century of life. They are the St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank (organized 1903), now reorganized as the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company; and the Citizens Savings Bank of Nashville (organized 1904).

Most of the Negro banks are supervised by state authorities. Only a few of them are members of the Federal Reserve System, although some now protect their depositors by membership in the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Most of them are small banks. The average deposit is necessarily small. The loans they make are to Negro business establishments, which are small concerns. The small volume of these investments tempts toward speculation. A survey of their assets shows comparatively little in United States bonds. Municipal bonds, paying higher interest rates, and real estate, which has rental value but which cannot be quickly turned into cash, are favorite forms of investment.

The Negro insurance company grew out of burial societies formed because standard insurance companies operated by whites refused to accept colored applicants except at increased premium rates. A great many fraternal organizations carry insurance there are a great many fraternal organizations with insurance benefits. Many of these companies are small affairs. Some of them do business only in one state; others only in two states. The Victory Life Insurance Company, organized in Chicago in 1923, did business in fourteen states, including New York where the requirements are very strict; and the National Benefit Life Insurance Company of Washington, D. C., extended its operations to twenty-eight states.⁸ Some of these companies are Old Line Legal Reserve life insurance companies. That is, they maintain the reserve required by law and write insurance in amounts of \$1,000 and upwards with premiums payable annually, semi-annually and quarterly. A few do industrial business as well; that is, they issue policies providing for death benefits only on which premiums are collected weekly. Many issue policies paying sick benefits, and at least

⁸ Carter G. Woodson, "Insurance Business among Negroes," *J. of Negro Hist.*, Apr., 1929, 14:202-26. The National Benefit Life Insurance Company failed in 1933, and the Victory got into difficulties but was reorganized and is still in operation.

one company does a casualty business. As in the case of banks, Negro insurance companies have suffered during the depression years. Unemployment and reduced wages among Negroes have resulted in a reduced volume of business and in many lapsed policies.

Still another business in which Negroes have had considerable success is real estate. In 1912 Mary White Ovington found the names of twenty-two real estate brokers in the New York Negro Business Directory.⁹ The housing problem created by the northward migration presented an unusual opportunity to real estate brokers. Row after row of apartment houses on the edge of the Negro quarter was bought up and rented or re-sold at inflated prices. Among the most successful dealers should be mentioned Wat Terry, W. H. Wortham, and Nail and Parker of New York, and Jesse Binga of Chicago. As already noted, banks and insurance companies are apt to be interested in urban real estate.

Carded information in the Small Business Section at the United States Department of Commerce discloses that there are more than 1,500 Negro manufacturers in the United States. Of these, the cosmetic industry is probably responsible for more employment than any other single line of Negro business. The pioneer in the industry was Madame C. J. Walker, famous for her hair-straightening process and the million dollar fortune which she left when she died in 1919. Equally successful was Mrs. Annie M. (Turnbo) Malone, manufacturer of her widely advertised "Wonderful Hair Grower" and other "Poro College" products. The size of these concerns is indicated by the facts that the plants where their preparations are made, located at Indianapolis and St. Louis, respectively, are variously valued at from \$350,000 to \$500,000. Both have recently ventured into the export trade. The Overton Hygienic Company of Chicago and Apex of Atlantic City are also large manufacturers of cosmetics. These firms are said to do an annual business of more than \$5,000,000, and give employment to scores of chemists and thousands of assistants and sales people. Almost any Negro newspaper will contain advertisements of High Brown Face Powder, Exelento, Herolin, Kinkout, and Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener, and the products themselves are on sale at practically every drug store.

Other men who have brought out popular goods are H. C. Haynes and A. C. Howard : the former, a barber ; the latter, a pullman porter. These men first improved upon implements used in their daily work and then turned to manufacturing them. The

⁹ *Half a Man*, 108.

result was the Haynes razor strop and the Howard shoe polish.¹⁰ Kansas City has a soap factory, St. Louis and Chicago have sausage factories, Louisville and Pensacola ice cream factories, Los Angeles a furniture factory, Indianapolis two garment factories, a cement blocks factory, and a milk products company. Memphis and six other cities have casket factories. Embalming fluids are made at Washington, D. C., and Piqua, Ohio. Chicago has a chemical factory and a therapeutic manufacturing plant. Jacksonville manufactures tooth powder and has two bottling plants. New York has a phonograph and record manufacturing plant specializing on Negro music, as well as a plant which manufactures "brownskin" dolls.

According to the Census Bureau, there were 29,827 retail stores in the United States operated by Negro proprietors in 1939. These stores provided employment for 42,894 persons (including proprietors), and their total annual sales were \$71,466,000. Of these, restaurants, eating and drinking places came first with 12,610; food stores (groceries, meats and confectionery), second with 11,038; fuel and ice dealers, third with 2,240; and the automotive group (motor vehicle dealers, garages and filling stations), fourth with 1,314. There were 548 drug stores, 437 second-hand stores, 348 cigar stores, 333 clothing and shoe stores, 232 general stores, 169 liquor stores, 128 florists, 99 news-stands, 65 furniture stores, 24 lumber establishments, 17 hardware stores, and miscellaneous enterprises.¹¹

The grocery keeper was formerly one of the most prosperous members of the Negro business group, but so many colored men have sunk their capital in groceries that the field has become overcrowded. Too often, moreover, the colored grocery is established on inadequate capital and is, therefore, restricted to a supply of stock which is wholly inadequate. The Italians and Hebrews have cut heavily into the grocery business of the Negro quarter, and the chain store will doubtless make it still more difficult for the Negro grocer to succeed. The average gross sales per Negro food store for 1939 were slightly in excess of \$2,000 a year. When fixed charges are deducted the proprietor's net income is low indeed.

Like an ill wind which blows somebody good, racial discrimination has played its part in building up the eating and drinking

¹⁰ J. H. Harmon, "The Negro as a Local Business Man," *J. of Negro Hist.*, Apr., 1929, 14:128.

¹¹ Bur. of Census, Retail Negro Proprietorships, 1939, mimeographed release, p. 4.

business among Negroes. The dispensing of ice cream and soft drinks is an important side line in many modern drug stores; indeed, it is often the chief business. The unwillingness of white fountains to serve Negroes made it necessary for them to develop places of their own. Many of these so-called druggists are unlicensed liquor sellers or dope peddlers. They would be unable to fill the simplest prescription presented by an unknowing stranger, and in such emergencies they rely on some genuine druggist located in the neighborhood.

The demands of the automobile have created the filling station and many Negroes have entered this field. For the most part they have succeeded. In many cases they maintain very respectable stations and handle the products of reputable refineries. In Chicago a Negro is the sole owner of a garage with a capacity of two hundred cars.

In 1935 there were 22,172 Negro service establishments hiring (in addition to the proprietors and firm members) 13,975 full-time employees. Their annual business was \$27,281,000. Barber shops lead the list with 6,821 establishments and 12,533 proprietors and full-time employees. Negro barbers are disappearing in the shops which cater to white trade, but the growth of urban population and the rise of group economy among Negroes has created a new class of patrons for the colored barber. Shoe repair shops and shine parlors come next with 3,633 establishments, closely followed by cleaning, dyeing, pressing and alteration shops with 3,326. These establishments provide employment for 4,630 and 5,068 persons respectively. There were 2,940 beauty parlors with 4,705 proprietors and full-time employees. Formerly the undertaking business went to white men, but today 4,046 colored funeral directors and employees conduct 1,458 undertaking establishments and crematories, and practically control this type of service among Negroes. As the death rate among Negroes is high, the business is a profitable one. These five kinds of business accounted for 82 per cent of all service establishments. There were 750 blacksmith shops, 315 laundries, and 284 printing and publishing establishments.¹²

The hotel business has become increasingly important in recent years. There are now 374 hotels in the country owned and operated by and for Negroes.¹³ Some are little more than boarding houses. Others, like the Vincennes, are equipped with private baths, elevator service, and spacious dining rooms.

¹² Bur. of Census, Negro Proprietorships—Service Establishments: 1935.

¹³ Bur. of Census, Distribution of Hotels operated by Negro Proprietors: 1935.

Nearly all Negro business enterprises are small concerns. This is necessarily true because of lack of capital. The great majority of them are located in Negro neighborhoods. Their volume of business is small. In 1928 the National Negro Business League made a survey of 1,534 Negro enterprises in thirty-three cities; 43.4 per cent of these enterprises were doing an annual business of less than \$5,000.¹⁴ Compared with white firms, they are unable to offer better wares, lower prices or superior service. Their appeal for support is based upon the theory that economic unity is necessary for the advancement of the race. Support of racial business is presented as an obligation, and those who do not patronize race institutions are denounced as enemies of their kind.

In an attempt to stimulate patronage the National Negro Business League organized the C.M.A. (Colored Merchants' Association) stores in 1929. The stores of this group were individually owned groceries. They combined for the purpose of reducing operating costs through cooperative buying and group advertising. Modest as the fees were, only a few Negro business men were able to join. The Negro buying public seemed to prefer standard brands of goods which the chain stores carried to the unfamiliar brands handled by the C.M.A. stores. Depression added to other difficulties, and the C.M.A. went down in disaster (1934).

It goes without saying that Negro business must employ Negro labor. That it does so explains why 34,000 Negro stenographers, bookkeepers and salesmen in 1920 have grown to 55,000 in 1930.¹⁵ This is a small number when compared with the number of Negro business enterprises. The small scale on which Negro business is established makes this inevitable. The low volume of business which most of them do makes it unnecessary to employ extra labor. The Bureau of Census shows that the 29,827 Negro-owned stores provide employment for 10,220 full-time and 3,558 part-time employees¹⁶—or an average of less than half an employee to each store.

In order to obtain their full share of employment, a "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign was started in 1931. Born in Chicago, it spread eastward. The "League for Fair Play" and the unincorporated "Afro-American Federation of Labor" con-

¹⁴ National Negro Business League, *Report of the Survey of Negro Business*.

¹⁵ Harris, *op. cit.*, 53.

¹⁶ Bur. of Census, *Retail Negro Proprietorships*, 1939, mimeographed release.

ducted a program of picketing and boycott against white stores operating in Negro districts but not employing Negro salesmen. This movement was one of the causes of the Harlem riot (1935). As a result of such campaigns, Negro clerks, managers and assistant managers are now employed in chain store units or independently owned white stores which cater to Negro trade.

Except for the financial institutions, the great majority of Negro businesses are individually owned. Of those surveyed by the Negro Business League in 1928, 2,191 (79.4 per cent) came under this classification; 334 (12.1 per cent) were partnerships, and 109 (3.9 per cent) were corporations, while the remainder were not reported. This is an indication of inefficiency. An individually-owned business has small expectation of surviving its founder. It is bound to be handicapped for want of capital, and it can hardly hope to do business in the face of white competition with more complete stocks of goods and greater buying power. That is one reason for Mr. J. H. Harmon's comment that

from one-half to two-thirds of the small business establishments of Negroes . . . listed in 1920 could not be found in 1927.¹⁷

A study of bookkeeping methods showed that 1,639 (59 per cent) used single entry, 371 double entry, 35 manifolding systems, and 421 (18.2 per cent) kept no records. Two hundred and nineteen (7.9 per cent) failed to give any information as to the system of bookkeeping used. Only 739 (27 per cent) of the group had cash registers. The majority purchased their supplies from local wholesalers, although a considerable number bought in the open market, frequently on bids. Of the total group, 1,703 (62 per cent) advertised their business, while 830 (30 per cent) reported that they did not advertise. The remainder made no report.¹⁸

The chief problems confronting Negro business may be stated as lack of adequate capital, of the experience necessary for efficient management, and of intelligent labor. Without capital or credit, the buying power of the Negro merchant is seriously hampered. He is not able to take advantage of the cash discounts which it is customary to offer, and this has its effect in preventing him from offering his wares at attractive prices. Efficient management cannot be obtained without experience, and there are so few Negro business men that it is impossible for many to secure training

¹⁷ *J. of Negro Hist.*, Apr., 1929, 14:140.

¹⁸ "The Negro in industry and business," *Opportunity*, May, 1929.

through apprenticeship. Except in rare cases, white establishments will not employ Negroes. Business courses in schools are generally not available, and, if they were, schools cannot take the place of experience. So the Negro business man has had to develop his technique through a process of trial and error. Negroes who act as clerks are largely untrained; Negroes with a high school or college education generally think it beneath their dignity to accept a clerkship in a store. So the problem of labor turnover is as much a nightmare to the Negro merchant as to the white industrialist.

A study of Negro business leads one to believe that it lives entirely on white suffrance. If the great white establishments with more abundant capital and more efficient methods want Negro business, they are able to undersell their colored competitors. The Negro has a purchasing power of \$2,000,000,000 per annum.¹⁹ Yet Negro retailers receive only \$24,816,000 of that sum.²⁰ Already, in the grocery and drug store fields chain stores are pushing colored business to the wall. At best, the business man must remain a small percentage of the total Negro population. Negro capitalism offers an escape only to a handful of the abler and more enterprising members of the race. Even should it succeed, the majority would still till the soil or work for white employers as they now do.

¹⁹ Florence Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 12.

²⁰ Bur. of Census, *Retail Negro Proprietorships*, 1939.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEGRO IN POLITICS*

It is one of the anomalies of our republican government that nearly one-tenth of our citizens of voting age are not permitted to vote. The Negro has no direct representation in any Southern legislature. As a class, he is unable to influence the selection of the judges and other public officials who are entrusted with the protection of his life, liberty and property. If a sheriff coolly surrenders a Negro to a Southern mob to be lynched, he has no way to bring political pressure on that sheriff. Most Negroes have no right to participate in the election of school officials who apportion the educational fund between the two races. In 1917 the voteless Negro was drafted to fight for a democracy which denied him political privileges. Although our government rests on the "consent of the governed," it is a fact that nearly ten million people in the United States are governed without their consent.

At the close of the Civil War, in a time of idealistic emotion, some three-quarters of a million Negroes were suddenly given political rights. Most of the new voters were ignorant in a sense of which illiteracy gives but a hint. They were utterly untaught in the principles of self-government. So ignorant were they of the nature of the franchise, that many went to the polls with baskets and bags in which to carry it away. It was only natural that this illiterate mass should have been exploited by designing politicians. The character of the reconstruction governments based on Negro suffrage is well known. It is unfortunate that those of the white race who won the Negro's confidence were not, with few exceptions, men of high character. As for the Southern whites, they were embittered by the humiliation of being governed by their former slaves; and the fear of "Negro domination" has since remained.

As federal military control was withdrawn the process of disfranchisement began. By the end of 1876 the Democrats had gained control in most Southern states, often using methods not defensible under the law. Mr. L. Q. C. Lamar, in his famous con-

*Much of the material in this chapter is found in an article which the author published in the *Journal of Negro History*, July, 1936, 21:256-74.

troversy with Blaine, explained the falling off of the Republican vote in Mississippi, where the Negroes had a majority of 40,000, by asserting that they had come to recognize that their true interests lay with the Democratic Party. Others explained the decreased Republican vote by saying that the Negroes were so busy with their farms and their growing bank accounts that they had lost interest in politics.¹ Most historians hold a different theory. The former masters were determined that whites should rule, and the Negroes were disfranchised by strong arm methods and ballot box stuffing. The political repression was accompanied by Ku Klux outrages which began in Tennessee and spread to other states. There were serious race riots in Mississippi and Louisiana, and official investigations numbered the dead in thousands.² Wholesale bribery was resorted to. The most effective method was to bribe the preachers, since the Negro church was a kind of political organization and those who voted contrary to the direction of their spiritual guides were ostracized and sometimes expelled from the church. In South Carolina the "eight ballot box law" provided as many ballot boxes as there were candidates, and the voter was required to deposit his ballot unaided in the proper receptacle. If he could not read there was every chance that he would invalidate his ballot by depositing it in the wrong place. Other states adopted the Australian ballot and required the voter to mark it without assistance. In Louisiana and North Carolina the governor was given large appointing power with the result that even black parishes and counties were administered by white officials. Such methods were condoned on the ground that the choice was often between Negro government on the one hand and illegal election contrivances on the other.

By the beginning of the '90s, the Negro was practically disfranchised. The corrupt methods used to bring this about began to be used against whites opposed to the reigning political clique. As these effects of corruption became evident, certain political leaders felt that it would be better to secure Negro disfranchisement by constitutional means.

In 1890 Mississippi adopted a constitution which disfranchised her Negroes. In 1895 South Carolina, by a somewhat different

¹ W. A. Dunning, "The Undoing of Reconstruction," *Atlantic Monthly*, Oct., 1901, 88:437-49; James M. Callahan in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, iv, 638-9.

² *Exec. Docs.*, 44 Cong., 2 sess., No. 30; *Sen. Reports*, 46 Cong., 2 sess., pt. 1 xviii.

amendment, did the same thing. Louisiana in 1898, North Carolina in 1900, Alabama and Virginia in 1901, Georgia in 1908 and Oklahoma in 1910 also revised the suffrage clauses of their constitutions. A disfranchising amendment was rejected in Arkansas in 1912, and in Maryland a similar amendment has been thrice rejected (1905, 1909, 1911). None of these constitutions discriminate on the ground of "race, color or previous condition of servitude." The end is achieved by a series of qualifications based upon literacy, property and the payment of taxes. Each state has an educational test. In North and South Carolina, Virginia and Mississippi the applicant must be able to read any part of the state constitution; in Alabama he must be able to read any part of the federal constitution; in Georgia he must be able to read any part of either the state or federal constitution. In Virginia, Louisiana and North Carolina he must make application for registration in his own handwriting. Several states have alternate property qualifications: \$300 in South Carolina and Louisiana, \$300 or forty acres of land in Alabama, \$500 or forty acres in Georgia. Two years' residence in the state is a frequent requirement. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana require the payment of poll taxes or other taxes. These must usually be paid from four to six months before the election at which the elector offers to vote, and the treasurer's receipt must be presented on election day to prove that the taxes have been paid. A voter who can meet these various qualifications may still be excluded from the franchise in South Carolina and Alabama if he has committed any of a long list of crimes of which Negroes are more likely than whites to be guilty: bigamy, adultery, wife-beating, burglary, perjury, larceny, vagrancy, deserting a plantation after receiving advances, receiving stolen goods and selling or offering one's vote for sale.

At the time these constitutions were adopted the Negro was generally illiterate and, as a class, owned no property. The door to the franchise was therefore closed. Furthermore, the poll tax requirement lent itself to discrimination in two ways. If the Negroes were less inclined to pay their taxes than the whites, they would be unable to satisfy the test; if they were careless about preserving their receipts they would be unable to prove that they had paid the tax and would thereby be disqualified from voting. A rigid enforcement of these provisions would have disfranchised many

white voters. These were rescued by temporary "grandfather," "good character" and "understanding" clauses, the object of which was to allow all white men who could vote when the change was made to get their names on a registration list which would guarantee them suffrage for life regardless of other qualifications. In Alabama, Virginia and Georgia the ballot is given to all persons who have served in the Union or Confederate armies or navies and the legal descendants of such persons. Louisiana, North Carolina and Oklahoma give the ballot to all persons who could vote on January 1, 1867—before the Negro was enfranchised in any Southern state—and the legal descendants of such voters inherit the right of suffrage. Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi and Virginia have an "understanding" clause as an alternative to the literacy test, allowing persons to vote if they can "understand" a passage of the constitution when read to them even though they may not be able to read it themselves. Alabama allows all persons "who are of good character and who understand the duties and obligations of citizens under the republican form of government" to register permanently. It should be noticed that any voter wishing to come under this class of exceptions to the general rule must register before a stated time, as January 1, 1904, in Virginia. Illiterates who became of age after the date specified do not automatically become voters.

The "understanding" and "grandfather" clauses have been the target of severe criticism. The Negro who cannot read cannot vote; but the illiterate white man retains his suffrage by virtue of his inheritance of the franchise or his expertness in constitutional law.

It is apparent that an inspector may easily reject as unreasonable an interpretation from a colored man and accept one no whit better from a white man. Such a discrimination in practice would be very hard to discover.³

Thus what purports to be an intelligence test turns out to be a game with loaded dice. It was inevitable that these clauses should be argued before the Supreme Court. In a Mississippi case, the Court declined to interfere.

It has not been shown (said Justice McKenna) that their actual administration was evil, only that evil was possible under them.⁴

³ Andrew C. McLaughlin, "Mississippi and the Negro Question," *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec., 1892, 70:828-37.

But in 1915 the "grandfather" clause of the Oklahoma constitution was held to be a violation of the Fifteenth Amendment.⁵ The decision affected only Oklahoma and Georgia because these clauses had already expired by limitation in other states. As frequently happens, the Court acted too late; illiterate whites in most Southern states had already placed their names on a permanent registration list, illiterate Negroes had not.

Judged by its results, the *coup d'etat* was successful. Of the 147,000 Negroes of voting age in Mississippi, only 37,000 could read and only 8,615 registered. In 1898 Louisiana reduced the number of registered Negroes from 127,000 to 7,000, and two years later further reduced this figure to 5,300. In Alabama, out of 130,000 Negroes of voting age, only 5,000 registered.⁶ The results in other states were as striking. Realizing the futility of the contest, the whites and mulattoes who controlled the Republican organizations in the South abandoned state politics and contented themselves with attending national conventions and subsisting on such crumbs of patronage as fell from the federal table. In recent times even the Republican Party has shown a tendency to oust the Negroes in several Southern states, the state organizations affecting to be "Lily-white." By expelling the Negro, Republican leaders hope to attract whites to their organization who, they know, will not join the party as long as the Negro is a Republican. Systematic exclusion of Negro delegates from the National Republican Convention began with the Hoover regime (1932), under the leadership of Postmaster General Walter Brown. In the convention of 1936, twenty-four "black and tan" delegates were disqualified, while twenty-one from Mississippi and South Carolina were seated.⁷

The desire to keep the ballot in white hands has recently led to a new device known as the "white primary." White solidarity in the South has long made the election a formality. The real contests are fought out in the primary where the candidates of the Democratic Party are nominated. Desiring that their vote be more than an empty formality, an increasing number of Negroes who can qualify under the literary and property clauses are registering as Democrats. As the primary is a bit of political machinery

⁴ Williams vs. Mississippi, 170 U. S., 213.

⁵ Guinn vs. United States, 238 U. S., 347.

⁶ James M. Callahan in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, iv, 641-2; A. B. Hart, *The Southern South*, 176.

⁷ New York Times, June 11, 1936, 18:2.

unknown to the Federal Constitution, it would seem that its regulation might be entrusted to state laws. In 1923 Texas enacted a law excluding Negroes from participating in the Democratic primaries of that state. This act fell before a decision of the Supreme Court. "It seems to us hard to imagine a more direct and obvious infringement of the Fourteenth Amendment," wrote Justice Holmes.⁸ A second Texas statute, which permitted the "state central committee of the several parties" to prescribe the qualifications for voting in their respective primaries, was likewise held to be unconstitutional (1932) as an improper delegation of power.⁹ Then the Democratic Party, without prompting from the legislature, ruled that only white citizens of Texas were eligible to membership. This time the Court by a unanimous verdict declared that while a state might not abridge the right to vote on the ground of race or color, a political party was "a voluntary organization, competent to decide its own membership," and might do the forbidden thing.¹⁰ In a Southern state, operating under a one-party system, such a decision is tantamount to a denial of the suffrage on the grounds of race and color despite the prohibition in the Fifteenth Amendment.¹¹

The great mass of Southern Negroes seem singularly unconcerned. They appear to feel that government is the white man's burden and he can bear it. In those states where the constitutions have not been revised, the Negro is constitutionally as free to exercise his right of franchise as in New England. But many disfranchise themselves, for only a comparatively small number attempt to meet the paltry requirement of paying the poll tax. In the words of the late Kelly Miller, dean of Howard University, they are "losing by default."¹² So long as certain Negroes believed that Democratic success would put them back into slavery, they voted in order to preserve their liberty. That fear being dispelled, they are no longer vitally interested in politics.

⁸ Nixon vs. Herndon, 273 U. S., 536.

⁹ Nixon vs. Condon, 286 U. S., 73; *New York Times*, May 3, 1932, 2:41; May 8, 1932, iii, 1:4.

¹⁰ Grove vs. Townshend, No. 563, October term, 1934; *New York Times*, Apr. 2, 1935, 15:1.

¹¹ The Negro was effectually barred from participating in the Texas primary in 1936. Cf. *New York Times*, May 24, 1936, 28:7. Still another case involving the Texas primary, Lonnie E. Smith vs. S. E. Allwright and J. J. Luizza, is on the way to the Supreme Court. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which has conducted all these cases, hopes to secure a reversal of opinion.

¹² Kelly Miller, "A Circuit of the South," *Voice of the Negro*, Sept., 1906; *New York Times*, May 8, 1932, iii, 6:1.

Where the Negro is not numerous enough to be politically a menace, providing always that there is no danger of the white vote being so divided as to make him a balance of power, there may be toleration for him at the polls. Such a situation occurs in Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga and other Tennessee cities where the local machine finds the Negro vote useful and consequently has relaxed its lily-white qualifications. In the Kentucky primaries of 1938 Senator "Dear Alben" Barkley and Governor "Happy" Chandler both courted the Negro vote. "Happy" called the old Negroes "Uncle," but "Dear Alben" controlled the W.P.A. rolls. In central Texas, where the number of Negroes is small, they vote in local elections. For many years selected Negroes have been permitted to vote in city elections at Atlanta, Durham, Raleigh and Richmond. In return for their support of the local machine, they receive concessions in the shape of better paving, garbage collection and the extension of other city services. They have even received representation on the police force.

But where his numbers enable him to threaten white political supremacy, there is an insistence that he shall not vote regardless of his qualifications. In the Second Congressional District of Texas, only 73,000 out of a population of 304,000 are permitted to vote. In other words, the Americanism which Mr. Dies represents is a democracy of thirty-five per cent! So far as it is possible to determine the attitude of the South, the Greenwood (Miss.) *Daily Commonwealth* expressed this when it said :

A good many Negroes are registering Our advice to these Negroes, and all other Negroes who contemplate registering, is that they had better get this idea out of their heads as soon as possible. The Negroes are getting along mighty well with the white people of Leflore County, and they have been for some time—and they ought to have better sense than to think that they will ever again have the remotest chance of voting in our elections. Such a thing is simply unthinkable, and the sooner these Negroes who have registered—and those who contemplate doing so—realize this fact, the better for them.¹³

In like spirit, Prof. Jerome Dowd, himself a Southerner, writes:

If every Negro in South Carolina and Mississippi could read and write and understand all the constitutions in the world, the white people would not allow them to control their governments . . .

¹³ Greenwood *Daily Commonwealth*, Feb. 5, 1919. Cf. also Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, June 20, 1919; Jacksonville (Fla.) *Metropolis*, Sept. 16, 1920; and a Florida election poster reproduced in *The Crisis*, May, 1925, 30:41.

Save by force of arms, no colored race is ever going to govern any state in this Republic.¹⁴

What have been the results of this practical exclusion of the Negro from political rights? One very harmful effect is the sense of injustice which is created in the mind of Negro leaders. "Taxation without representation is just as unjust today as it was in 1776," cries William J. Edwards, principal of the Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute.¹⁵ Conferences of Negroes have repeatedly protested against the discrimination. The call to the Fourth Annual Session of the National Race Congress reads:

The right to vote and be voted for, is the first of rights. It is the vital principle of self-government and individual liberty. The ballot marks the difference between the citizen and the serf. Without the ballot the colored American is powerless to contend for right and justice and civil equality; with the ballot he is all-powerful to act in defense of every lawful privilege.¹⁶

In reply to the question, "What does the Negro want in our democracy"? Richard R. Wright, Jr., said:

The Negroes' wants in "our democracy" are simple and fundamental. The Negro wants a democracy and not a "whiteocracy" The right to express opinion as to what laws shall govern the democracy and who shall execute them is fundamental. It is notorious that where nine-tenths of the Negroes live they are denied the right to vote, and in defiance of the spirit of "our democracy" And this Negro will not be satisfied until he gets a fair chance to vote. And until that chance is given "our democracy" is merely a sham and a farce.¹⁷

I hold these truths to be self evident (declared DuBois in 1928), that a disfranchised working class in modern industrial civilization is worse than helpless. It is a menace not simply to itself but to every other group in the community. It will be diseased, it will be criminal, it will be ignorant, it will be the plaything of mobs, and it will be insulted by caste restrictions.¹⁸

The South is paying a high price for Negro disfranchisement. As literacy opens a constitutional way to the exercise of the franchise, the Negro will squeeze through the barrier in time if proper educational facilities are provided. This fact makes some states

¹⁴ *The Negro in American Life*, 108.

¹⁵ *Twenty-five Years in the Black Belt*, 95.

¹⁶ R. T. Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro*, 56.

¹⁷ *National Conference of Social Work*, 1919, 539-44.

¹⁸ Paper read at the Inter-racial Conference, Washington, D. C., 1928.

negligent in providing proper schools for Negroes.¹⁹ But a large number of illiterates, even though they are without political power, can hardly be an asset to a nation. In practice, Negro suffrage has saddled the South with a one-party system. With a single party, issues are bound to be purely local and this has resulted in the virtual disfranchisement of the whites in national and sometimes even in state elections. The Negro forced prohibition on the South long before the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment. In order to deprive the black man of his gin, the Southern white was compelled to vote dry even though he drank wet. Fear of Negro domination retarded the granting of suffrage to women because of the possibilities which might result from enfranchising black females. It has exposed the South to the rule of demagogues like Tillman, Blease, Vardaman, Hefflin, Talmadge and Huey Long, who, by playing on the prejudice of ignorant voters, are able to ride themselves into office on the spectre of Negro rule. "To hell with the Constitution when the virtue of a woman is at stake" does not sound like a constructive platform; yet it was the issue on which Cole Blease ran for the United States Senate in the Year of our Lord 1930. So long as such mentality governs the South, the Southern Negro will remain politically dumb; and all the decisions of the Supreme Court will not make it otherwise.

In the Northern and Western states the Negro is a voter. As a result of the heavy influx of Negroes during the World War and Post-War periods, he has become an important factor in several Northern states. Moreover, the race is so massed in certain counties and city wards that it is sometimes able to control the election of local officials. In Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Cincinnati, New Haven, East Chicago and Gary, Negroes appear as members of city councils or of boards of aldermen. Furthermore, segregation has enabled the Negro to elect members of his race to legislatures in several Northern states. As of November, 1941, twelve state legislatures contained Negro members. There were six in Pennsylvania, four in Illinois, three each in New York and Indiana, two in Michigan, and one each in New Jersey, West Virginia, Kentucky, California, Kansas, Nebraska, and Ohio.²⁰ In 1928, Oscar DePriest, long a figure of political importance in the South Side of Chicago, was sent to represent the First Illinois District in the national House of Representatives. He served until the fall of 1934 when another Negro succeeded him.

¹⁹ U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 40.
²⁰ *Negro Handbook*, 175-8.

The political influence of the black voter has compelled recognition of the Negro in the distribution both of federal and state patronage. The ministers to Haiti and Liberia are usually members of the race, and the Republican state organizations in the South usually contain one or more professional politicians like Benjamin Jeff Davis of Georgia or Perry Howard of Mississippi. A great many colored janitors are employed about government buildings and some colored clerks are found in the various departments at Washington. But of late there has been a tendency to demand a share of the more important political plums.²¹ The existence of such tax-supported institutions as the West Virginia State College for Negroes, the Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics, the West Virginia Colored Orphans' Home, and others, all directed and manned by Negroes, testifies to the Negro's political power in West Virginia. Institutions for Negroes in other states also bear witness to their political influence.

It is by no means certain to what extent the Negro is susceptible to the influence of corrupt politicians. Undoubtedly there have been cases of exploitation of the Negro vote by Northern politicians to the detriment of the country. (White voters are not entirely beyond criticism on this point). The Harlem districts of New York cast heavy votes for Mayors Hylan and Walker.²² William Hale Thompson, who has the distinction of having been Chicago's worst mayor, had the solid support of Chicago's "black belt" at every quadrennial election from 1915 to 1931. More than 50,000 of his 83,000 plurality in 1923 was rolled up in three Negro wards.²³ One of the most common charges growing out of the Chicago riot was that it was partly the result of intolerable political conditions due to the influence of the Negro in polities. "While the South is disfranchising by legislation, the North is doing it by cash," is the comment which Ray Stannard Baker made long ago.²⁴ On the other hand, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research declared:

²¹ *The Negro Handbook* (pages 173-5) lists 126 Negroes holding high appointive positions in the Federal Government as of December 31, 1941.

²² Colored Citizens Non-Partisan Committee for the Reelection of Mayor Walker, *New York City and the Colored Citizens*, 1929.

²³ Elmer Davis, "Portrait of an Elected Person," *Harper's Mag.*, July, 1927, 155:171-85; Graham Taylor, "Chicago rising from its fall," *Survey*, June 18, 1921, 46:397; *New Republic*, Apr. 6, 1926, 50:186; "What Big Bill's Election Means," *Lit. Digest*, Apr. 16, 1927, 93:5; *Chicago Daily News, Almanac and Year Book*.

²⁴ *Following the Color Line*, 269.

the newly arrived migrants have exercised the use of the ballot in a commendable fashion when one considers their lack of experience in politics.²⁵

In the past it was taken for granted that Negroes were Republicans. Black mothers taught their baby boys that the pathway to heaven consisted of four steps: to repent, to believe, to be baptised, and to "jine the Republican Party." In this spirit, Frederick Douglass once declared, "The Republican Party is the ship; all else is the sea." But the Negro of today has begun to doubt the divinity of Republicanism. In New York, Tammany has made great gains in the Negro districts. In 1922, the Harlem Negroes sent a Democrat to represent the Twenty-first District at Albany, and since that time political control of Harlem has been divided between the two parties. In 1924, Henry W. Shields, Democratic Negro candidate of the Twenty-first District, was elected to the state assembly. In the Nineteenth District, a white Democrat was elected to the board of aldermen despite the fact that there was a colored candidate on the Republican ticket.²⁶ In 1930, the Democratic organization nominated two colored lawyers of New York City for municipal judgeships, and elected them.²⁷ In 1935, a Negro, Herbert L. Bruce, was elected to the executive council of Tammany Hall.²⁸ The Kelly-Nash machine in Chicago and the Pendergast machine in Kansas City work in the same way. In Chicago and St. Louis the "numbers" and other rackets flourish undisturbed in the Negro quarter. "Protection" money helps to fill the machine treasury. The Democratic ward leaders also see to it that Negroes get their full share of the relief funds. In Chicago (1936) forty per cent of the Negroes were on relief; in St. Louis, fifty per cent. And the ward politicians let it be distinctly understood that they must vote Democratic in order to stay on relief. The Chicago Better Government Association, reporting on the Second Ward in 1939, said,

The relief situation probably has had more to do with the falling off of the Republican vote in this ward than any other factor.

A letter, dated November 3, 1939, written by Hon. Arthur W. Mitchell to an applicant seeking W.P.A. work, is enlightening:

²⁵ *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. ix, 7.

²⁶ *Outlook*, July 23, 1924, 137:472-3.

²⁷ Today Negroes hold four municipal judgeships in New York City.

²⁸ There are now two Negroes on Tammany's executive committee. *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1935, 6:2; Oct. 6, 1939, 22:6.

It is an unbroken rule of the Democratic organization in Chicago that each person seeking help from his Congressman must first get a letter from his ward committeeman requesting the Congressman to take care of the matter. I must, therefore, insist that you get a letter from your committeeman first, and then I shall be very glad to do everything in my power to help you.²⁹

The race claims credit for the defeat of several members of Congress who voted against anti-lynching bills. The opposition to Mr. Borah as a Republican candidate for the Presidency (1936) was based on this ground. And it was Negro opposition to Mr. Borah that defeated him in the Ohio primaries.³⁰ In the meantime the Negro has found other targets for his political opposition. In 1930, President Hoover sent to the Senate the name of Judge John Parker as Justice of the Supreme Court. It was reported that in 1920, as Republican gubernatorial candidate in North Carolina, Judge Parker had said:

The Negro as a class does not desire to enter politics. The Republican Party of North Carolina does not desire him to do so. We recognize the fact that he has not yet reached the stage in his development where he can share the burdens and responsibilities of government. . . . The participation of the Negro in politics is a source of evil and danger to both races and is not desired by the wise men in either race or by the Republican Party of North Carolina.³¹

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People telegraphed Judge Parker to ascertain whether he was correctly quoted and, if so, whether he held the same views in 1930 as in 1920. When three days passed without a reply, it was decided to oppose the confirmation of his appointment. Parker's defeat was due to a combination of labor union and Negro influence.³²

Delivered from Parker, the Negro turned upon senators who voted for his confirmation. Senators Henry J. Allen of Kansas and Roscoe McCulloch of Ohio, both Republicans who had supported Parker, were defeated for reelection in 1930. In each instance, there were other factors which entered into their defeat, but there is no doubt that the colored vote was influential. While Senator

²⁹ Lawrence Sullivan, "The Negro Vote," *Atlantic*, Oct., 1940, 166:477-84.

³⁰ *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1936, 4:5; Jan. 21, 1936, 2:3; Jan. 28, 1936, 6:5; Jan. 29, 1936, 13:8; Mar. 22, 1936, iv, 11:6; *Crisis*, Jan., 1936, 43:19; Mar., 1936, 43:70-2.

³¹ *Chicago Defender*, May 31, 1930.

³² W. E. B. DuBois, "The Defeat of Judge Parker," *Crisis*, July, 1930, 37:225-7.

Capper, who voted against Parker's confirmation, was loyally supported by the Negro voters, Senator Allen received only 27 per cent of the vote in the Negro districts of Kansas City. The colored districts of Cleveland, Toledo, Akron, Columbus and Canton went to McCulloch's Democratic opponent by margins of from 50 to 86 per cent, while many voters in these districts refrained from voting for United States Senator.³³ In New Jersey, the Negroes united against Senator Baird, a Parker senator, and were pleased to encompass his defeat for the governorship. While the Negroes of California had been strongly behind Senator Shortridge in 1926, in 1932 they repudiated him as a consequence of his vote for Parker, and he lost the Republican nomination at the primaries. Negro voters also opposed Senators Metcalf of Rhode Island and Hastings of Delaware, although both retained their seats.

In national elections, too, the Negro has discovered that Abraham Lincoln is no longer a candidate, and there has been some tendency to break away from the Republican fold. There was considerable disappointment because of President Taft's alleged discrimination against the colored race in the matter of presidential appointments. When, in 1912, Woodrow Wilson promised the Negro "Justice . . . and not mere grudging justice," Bishop Walters of the A. M. E. Z. Church announced that he would support Wilson. A Negro bureau was established at Democratic headquarters and Wilson polled a considerable portion of the colored vote. But the Wilson administration was a disappointment. Dominated by Southern leadership, the Negro was recognized in but few important appointments. Even the minister to Haiti turned out to be a white man. There was segregation in many departments and bureaus, and there was no constructive policy so far as the Negro was concerned. By 1916 most of the sable prodigals had returned to the fold and docilely voted for Hughes. In 1920, Cox made no appeal to the colored vote and failed to receive it. In 1924, Mr. Davis stated that if elected he would know neither race nor creed in the making of appointments. LaFollette's promises were of like tenor. Under such stimuli some colored voters bolted Coolidge, and most of them supported Davis. In 1928, there was much opposition to Herbert Hoover. Leading colored politicians, like Robert R. Church of Tennessee, refused to serve on the colored Advisory Committee. Important newspapers like the Chicago *Defender*, the Baltimore *Afro-American*, the Boston *Guardian*, and the Nor-

³³ *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 15, 1930; Walter White, "Negroes and the Supreme Court," *Harper's Mag.*, Jan., 1931, 162:238-46.

folk *Journal and Guide* supported Governor Smith. The causes of the Democratic bolt are partially due to the falling off of patronage during the administrations of Harding and Coolidge, the failure of the Republican Party to denounce the Klan in its platform, and to Mr. Hoover's alliance with the "Lily-white" factions of the South.³⁴

President Hoover's record in office was anything but satisfactory to the Negro. His refusal to recognize the race in major appointments, the nomination of Judge Parker, the Jim Crowing of the colored Gold Star mothers by the War Department, and the ignoring of race problems, particularly lynching, in his messages to Congress were considered by colored political leaders to be major crimes. Robert Lee Vann, editor of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, urged his 70,000 subscribers to forget the Republican Party. This attitude was characteristic of the leading Negro periodicals. They repudiated Mr. Hoover and all his works.

In no election since 1860 have American politicians been so "Negro-minded" as in 1936. The Negro cast a large bloc of votes in at least half a dozen Northern states. Since a shift of this bloc would turn the state in a close election, the work of the Negro bureaus assumed a greater importance than ever before. There were thirty-two Negro delegates at the Democratic National Convention at Philadelphia. A Negro minister was permitted to pray over the convention, and a second Negro, Congressman Mitchell, was allowed to second the nomination of President Roosevelt—although Senator Ellison D. Smith of South Carolina raised the race issue by walking out on both occasions.³⁵ Both parties picked Negro campaign managers.³⁶ But the Democrats were more persistent in their efforts to woo the Negro vote. Speaking before the annual convention of the I.B.P.O.E.W. (colored Elks), Governor Lehman of New York promised cooperation in breaking down the barriers of race and religious hate, and Mayor LaGuardia said,

No one can say that my administration treats the Negro unfairly. We hire men because of their competence, not because they have black skins or blue eyes.³⁷

³⁴ Chicago *Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1928; Chicago *Defender*, Oct. 20, 27, Nov. 3, 1928.

³⁵ New York *Times*, June 25, 1936, 12:4; June 26, 1936, 15:5.

³⁶ *Time*, Aug. 17, 1935, 28:10-11.

³⁷ New York *Times*, Aug. 25, 1936, 20:3.

On the anniversary of the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation (September 22), a nation-wide drive to enlist the Negroes under the New Deal began. A monster mass meeting was held at Madison Square Garden, whose proceedings were broadcast over a nation-wide hook-up. Among the speakers were such prominent New Deal "aces" as Donald Richberg, Representative Caroline O'Day, and Senator Robert F. Wagner. President Roosevelt sent a letter. In twenty-five industrial cities, other meetings were being held simultaneously.³⁸

Secretary Ickes made speeches to a number of Negro audiences. He asserted that President Roosevelt, more than any president since Lincoln, realized that the existence of the Civil War amendments in the Constitution was no guarantee of their enforcement. By implication, he promised that Mr. Roosevelt would enforce these amendments. Repeatedly he listed the benefits which the administration had conferred upon the Negro: (1) large sums of relief money spent for them, (2) work relief jobs without discrimination, (3) federal farm aid without discrimination, (4) efforts to provide low-cost housing in nineteen slum clearance projects, (5) employment of Negroes as architects and managers in these projects, (6) rural resettlement work, (7) P.W.A. grants to Howard University, (8) P.W.A. aid to Negro schools all over the country, (9) 3,050 additional beds in Southern Negro hospitals provided by P.W.A., (10) the Social Security Act.³⁹ He might have added that the Negro had fared better in patronage under Mr. Roosevelt than under any Republican president. Congressman Mitchell stated that "Mr. Roosevelt has appointed more Negroes to responsible government positions than the last three Republican administrations taken together."⁴⁰

The Democratic Negroes were well organized. Well in front was Robert Lee Vann, and the circulation of his *Courier* was now estimated at 178,000. Col. J. E. Spingarn, president of the N.A.A.C.P. and a life-long Republican, came out for Roosevelt. Mr. Roosevelt had done more for the Negro than any president since Lincoln. No man in America was more free from color prejudice.⁴¹ The Washington *Tribune*, with a circulation of over 10,000, printed two columns of quotations from other Negro papers, all of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 22, 1936, 4:2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 27, 1936, 8:2; June 30, 1936, 10:5; Oct. 27, 1936, 1:6; *Crisis*, Aug., 1936, 43:230-31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1936, 3:2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 19, 1936, 2:3.

which were enthusiastic for the New Deal. Emmett J. Scott of Howard University wrote,

The Republican Party, since the days of the administration of President Taft, has been most negligent of the Negro.⁴²

Congressman Mitchell flayed the Republican Party, charging that it had promised to "do something" for the Negro but had only led him "dumb and hopeless" down another road. In twenty-three states where the Negro voted, he predicted, they would cast 2,400,000 votes for Roosevelt.⁴³ Julian D. Rainey, a Negro lawyer of Boston and son of a reconstruction congressman, had charge of organizing the Eastern Negroes.⁴⁴ Dr. Stanley High organized the Good Neighbor League, and devoted a considerable time to political work.⁴⁵ Even Mr. Farley became "democratic" enough to talk to a huge Negro crowd at Philadelphia.⁴⁶ A million photographs showing Mrs. Roosevelt being shown over Howard University were mailed out, and hung on the walls of Negro homes where Mr. Lincoln had hung before. The Negroes yielded to this political seduction. A deep sense of gratitude for the benefits of the New Deal outweighed the traditions handed down from the Civil War. The Negroes voted not for Lincoln and emancipation, but for Roosevelt and relief. "They say Roosevelt saved them from starvation, gave them aid when they were in distress, and now they are going to vote for him."⁴⁷

In 1940 both major political parties again made efforts to win the Negro vote. Wendell L. Willkie, Republican candidate for President, made a strong plea:

There is no reason why Negroes should be denied employment by utilities. I am against all that kind of bunk. You are citizens like anybody else. If I am elected President, I will seek to remove all kinds of discrimination from all groups. . . . Irrespective of whether Negroes go down the line for me or not, they can expect every consideration. They will get their fair representation in policy-making bodies. They will get the same consideration as other citizens.⁴⁸

John L. Lewis, addressing the opening session of the third National Negro Congress at Washington, accused the Democratic Party of breaking the 1936 platform pledges to care for the unemployed.⁴⁹

⁴² *Opportunity*, Mar., 1936, 14:70-1.

⁴³ *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1936, 2:5.

⁴⁴ *Time*, Aug. 17, 1936, 28:10-11.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 1936, 10:5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1936, 3:2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug 23, 1936, ii, 6:2.

⁴⁸ *Negro Handbook*, 168.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Apr. 27, 1940, 5:5.

More than sixty prominent Negroes signed a resolution assailing Mr. Roosevelt's treatment of their race. Racial intolerance and segregation were fostered by the New Deal. They listed six alleged acts of discrimination.⁵⁰ Other reputable Negro leaders mentioned discrimination against Negroes in the distribution of federal subsidies for education, housing, public health and for elimination of farm tenancy. They charged that Negroes, by various devices, were practically excluded from higher brackets of federal civil service. They recalled many eloquent campaign promises by New Dealers that a federal anti-lynching bill would be enacted.⁵¹

On the other hand, Mayor LaGuardia addressed the fifteenth convention of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters at Harlem. Men "who toil for their living" and who have seen "the interest of their own government in their own families" in the last seven years "would naturally" support Mr. Roosevelt, he said.⁵² The Colored Division of the Democratic National Committee issued a pamphlet quoting from *Mein Kampf*: "Negroes are lower than apes." It then directed attention to Mr. Willkie's German ancestry:

Willkie's father was born in Germany. Willkie's grandfather was born in Germany. Willkie's mother's parents were born in Germany. Willkie's wife was born in Kentucky of German parentage. His whole background is German.⁵³

The *Crisis* issued an excellent summary of what it considered the issues of the campaign. Neither Mr. Willkie nor Mr. Roosevelt had said anything new on the lynching question.

Mr. Willkie thinks there ought to be a law. President Roosevelt declared the "strong arm of government" ought to curb mob outrages.

But there was, said *Crisis*, a great difference between a pre-election promise and a post-election statute. Mr. Willkie's position was excellent on the subject of relief, employment, and discrimination in departments of the federal government, including the civil service. But would Mr. Willkie find himself in a position to keep those pledges if he were elected?

Mr. Willkie labors under the handicap that his party has made promises similar to these before and has done nothing to redeem them after getting in office. The Republican Party has been in power much more often, and for longer periods than the Democrats. Its performance on the Negro is nothing about which to boast.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1940, 12:2.

⁵¹ Lawrence Sullivan, "The Negro Vote," *Atlantic*, Oct., 1940, 166:477-84.

⁵² *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1940, 25:6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1940, 1:2; Oct. 13, 1940, 25:1; Oct. 18, 1940, 15:4.

⁵⁴ "The Willkie Speeches," *Crisis*, Oct., 1940, 311.

CHAPTER X

THE NEGRO CRIMINAL

Despite the elaborate codes for dealing with Negro criminals, there were few Negroes in the prisons of Southern states prior to the Civil War. In all but the most severe cases, offenders were punished by their masters. But with the sudden removal of restraints caused by emancipation and the accompanying breakdown of government, crimes among Negroes increased alarmingly. State after state found itself with a rapidly increasing prison population and resources so diminished that it could not make appropriations for its maintenance. Thousands of able-bodied Negroes were confined in the penitentiaries while the plantations were crying for labor. Out of this situation came the lease system by which the state leased its prisoners to planters and corporations, and what had formerly been an expense was converted into a profit. Under the lease system the control of the convicts passed into the hands of lessees who paid the cost of their maintenance plus a bonus for each convict to the state. Often the lessee assigned a portion of his convicts to a sub-lessee, at a profit, of course. Thus we find Virginia convicts being worked by a canal company. Tennessee worked a part of its convicts within the prison walls, a part on farms, and the rest were leased to railway companies and coal mines. North and South Carolina employed a portion of their convicts within walls. The rest were scattered over the state under various lessees. Much of the tunnelling of the Western Carolina Railroad through the Blue Ridge was accomplished by convict labor. Georgia's convicts were leased to lumber camps and brick yards. Alabama employed hers in railroad building, in mines and saw mills. Mississippi's convicts were leased to railway contractors and planters. Until 1883 the lessees of Texas convicts employed a portion of them in a cotton mill and at other trades within the walls of the penitentiary and placed the remainder in railway construction camps. Arkansas convicts were let to plantation owners and coal mines. In Florida the majority of the convicts were leased to turpentine farms; a smaller number were employed in phosphate mines.

The treatment of convicts by lessees who were interested only

in their labor was frequently a disgrace to civilization. Half clothed and scantily fed, the convicts were compelled to labor twelve or more hours per day. There was little medical attendance and almost no care of the sick. As late as 1924 a Negro convicted of vagrancy was whipped to death in an Alabama mine.¹ Brutal treatment and neglect of the most ordinary sanitation resulted in frightful mortality. From 1882 to 1887 the annual death rate among Mississippi convicts was 15 per cent.² In the first twelve years under the lease system in Georgia nearly one-third of the prisoners died or escaped; in South Carolina the proportion was about one-fourth.³ In 1869, according to R. W. Dawson, President of the Board of Inspectors of Convicts, the death rate among Alabama convicts was 41 per cent—an epidemic death rate without an epidemic.⁴ In 1873 Warden Willis took the convicts from the lessees and brought them to the prison "owing, principally, to the fact that their condition was such that unless they were better cared for they would all soon die."⁵

Mississippi abolished the lease system after January 1, 1895. In 1897 Georgia purchased a prison farm upon which some convicts were confined. But the lease system was still permitted with respect to long term convicts until 1909. Alabama was the last state to abolish the lease system, which she did in 1927. Nevertheless, the Wickersham Commission reported that leasing was still practiced in at least three Southern states.⁶ One method of evasion is through the use of paroles.

It has been our observation (says the Texas Board of Pardons), and we have had much practical evidence . . . that the principal motive that has impelled an application for the parole of convicts . . . has been to obtain able-bodied men who are capable of rendering good service . . . at comparatively speaking, a low compensation. The longer the term the convict has to serve the more desirable he is to the applicant for parole. . . . Without a very close and careful surveillance of the men who are paroled, their condition may become one that would amount almost to slavery.⁷

¹ William H. Skaggs, *The Southern Oligarchy*, 247.

² J. H. Jones, "Penitentiary Reform in Mississippi," *Pubs. of Miss. Hist. Soc.*, vi, 111-28.

³ Wm. O. Scroggs in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, vi, 50.

⁴ Daffold Berney (ed.), *Handbook of Alabama*, 257.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶ National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, *Report on Penal Institutions, Probation and Parole*, 82.

⁷ Texas Board of Pardons, *Report*, Jan., 1919.

Apparently the paroled prisoner has no remedy. If he leaves his employer he becomes a fugitive from justice, liable to incur an additional prison term as an escaped convict.

In order to avoid the expense of supporting short term convicts committed to the county jail, local governments have been quick to follow the example set by state governments. The chain gang is that portion of the county convicts which constitute the road construction force. Chain gang convicts are shackled. They work under a gun. They frequently wear stripes and sleep in cages. The sanitation of chain gang camps is sometimes atrocious. The North Carolina Board of Public Welfare said,

The method of disposing of the sewage is most unsanitary. The night buckets are emptied just behind the tents in which the prisoners sleep. This practice exposes men to the unpleasant odors and danger of contracting disease.⁸

At some camps there are no bathing facilities. At others a weekly bath is provided in a tub, several men being permitted to wash in the same water.⁹ Again :

Two of the sick were confined in one cage. The sick men . . . have tuberculosis. . . . The tubercular patients have no receptacles to expectorate in, consequently they use the ground, the floor of their cage, and anything that is convenient. There are no screens on the cages or in the kitchen to protect the food. Flies are swarming everywhere. . . . The filth of the bedding and the sleeping quarters of this camp is indescribable.¹⁰

In Texas,

We found men suffering from advanced stages of syphilis and tuberculosis working side by side in the fields with other men, and sleeping side by side with them at night, eating out of the same utensils and using the same sanitary necessities.¹¹

Under such conditions infection spreads. Bed clothing swarms with vermin.¹² DuBois tells of a young girl at Camp Hardemont, Georgia, who was repeatedly outraged by her guards, and finally

⁸ Dowd, *The Negro in American Life*, 145, quoting Report, 1921, 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Bull. N. C. Board of Charities and Pub. Welfare, Mar., 1923, 16-17.

¹¹ Report of sub-committee of the Central Investigating Committees of the House and Senate, Texas, 35 legislature, 3d sess., 1918, 281.

¹² Bull. S. C. State Board of Charities and Corrections, Sept., 1918, 38; Report of the sub-committee of the Central Investigating Committees of the House and Senate, Texas, 35 legislature, 3d sess., 1918, 271; Macon Daily Telegraph, Feb. 11, 1923.

died in childbirth while in camp.¹³ In other respects the most brutal treatment is recorded: prisoners compelled to work when sick, lack of medical attendance, and beatings on the bare back with a wagon trace.¹⁴

In default of money with which to pay fines, county convicts are often bonded out to white men who will pay them. In times of labor shortage the police round up "vagrants" who are then bonded out to white men needing labor. Bonded short term convicts are charged for rations, clothing and other "advances." Thus they get into debt and a type of peonage results. Other peons are found in the Florida turpentine camps. The Florida statute makes the violation of a contract, by leaving employment after "money or other things of value" have been received, evidence of fraudulent intent. Negroes entering into contracts in the turpentine camps are furnished with a suit of overalls, or a pair of shoes for which they are debited on the company's books. Other "advances" keep them continuously in debt. If they attempt to run away they are liable to incur a sentence to the chain gang under the "fraud contract" law. It has been charged that some of the turpentine companies have understandings with county judges and prosecuting attorneys to supply them with enough Negro convict labor to keep the roads

¹³ *Some Notes on Negro Crime, Particularly in Georgia*, 4-5. *Vid.* Frank Tannenbaum, *Darker Phases of the South*, 104-5.

¹⁴ "Caught in the attempt to ride on a train without a ticket, Martin Tabert was sentenced by a local (Florida) judge to pay a fine of \$25 or to ninety days' imprisonment. The Putnam Lumber Company has leased 'all able-bodied male prisoners for a term of one year,' and Tabert was taken to one of the company's camps In the lumber camp Tabert was taken ill and was unable to work, and one Friday night, in the presence of 85 convicts, he was called out and given from '35 to 50 licks with a 4-inch strap, 5 feet long, 3-ply leather at the handle, 2-ply half way down.' 'The whipping boss,' according to an eye-witness, 'put his feet on Martin's neck to keep him from moving out of position as he whipped him.' The next day, sick and blind with fever, he was forced to work. Sunday he lay half unconscious in his bunk. Three days later he was dead, and the doctors pronounced his case 'pernicious malaria'." Editorial, *New York World*, Apr. 1, 1923. *Vid. Bull. N. C. Board of Public Welfare*, 1st quarter, 1923, p. 15; W. O. Saunders, "Cleaning out North Carolina's Convict Camps," *Survey*, May 15, 1915, 34: 153; "The New Slavery in the South—An Autobiography" by a Georgia Negro Peon, *Independent*, Feb. 18, 1904, 56:306-15; "Alabama's Convict System under Fire," *Lit. Digest*, Apr. 10, 1926, 89:10-11; "North Carolina's Chain Gang System on Trial," *Lit. Digest*, Apr. 14, 1926, 89:90-4; "A Victim of Convict Slavery," *Lit. Digest*, Apr. 21, 1923, 77:40-6; Burt M. McConnell, "Barbarism to Convicts," *Nation*, Nov. 10, 1926, 123:479-80; A. J. McKelway, "The Convict Lease System in Georgia," *Outlook*, Sept. 12, 1908, 90:67-72; "Convict Lease Atrocities," *Outlook*, Aug. 22, 1908, 89: 870; Alfred C. Newell, "Georgia's Barbarous Convict System," *World's Work*, Oct., 1908, 16:10829-31; *Second Annual Report of State Board of Pub. Welfare of S. Carolina*, 1921, 112-13.

in repair.¹⁵ It is a good thing to have as many Negro convicts as possible. It furnishes the state with a cheap and steady labor supply.

In 1920 widespread conditions of peonage were reported in Early, Dooley, Worth, Decatur, Toombs and Morgan counties, Georgia. The first annual report of Attorney-General Daugherty (Dec., 1921) says,

Complaints arising under this act increased during the year, and peonage was found to exist to a shocking extent in Georgia, Alabama and some parts of Texas.¹⁶

One of the worst cases was discovered on the farm of John S. Williams in Jasper County, Georgia. Williams was accustomed to frequent the stockades of Atlanta, Macon and other cities, paying the fines of Negroes who were then "bonded" to him. Many of these were held for years after their fines were worked out. Finally, to prevent the facts of peonage from becoming known, Williams began to kill his Negroes and secrete their bodies. At least eleven were thus disposed of.¹⁷ The case attracted national attention and caused Governor Hugh M. Dorsey to publish a pamphlet, entitled *As to the Negro in Georgia*, in which he cited one hundred and thirty-five cases of alleged mistreatment of Negroes in his state (including twelve cases of peonage) which had come under his observation.

Of course, peonage is a federal offense. But cases usually must be based upon complaints, and a Negro will seldom make a complaint against his white employer. If he does, the investigation must uncover sufficient evidence to secure a grand jury indictment. Then comes the actual trial in which a jury of twelve white men must be convinced that the Negro is telling the truth and the white defendant's statements are false. This is an almost impossible hurdle. While the lease system and its present-day successors, the chain gang and "bonded" convicts, are legally no respecter of races, there is a vast difference between the letter of the law and actual practice. Whites are seldom sent to the chain gang or bonded.

The impression is current that Negroes are more criminal than

¹⁵ New York Times, Nov. 30, 1936, 2:3; O. K. Armstrong, "Legal Peonage in Florida," Nation, Aug. 21, 1937, 145:195-7.

¹⁶ House Docs., 67 Cong., 2 sess., No. 241, p. 98. Vid. Gov. Hugh M. Dorsey, *As to the Negro in Georgia*, 6f; Walter Wilson, "Cotton Peonage," New Republic, Dec. 16, 1931, 69:130-2; Memphis Triangle, Aug. 18, 1929.

¹⁷ "Georgia's Death Farm," Lit. Digest, Apr. 16, 1921, 60:13-14. Vid. Lafayette M. Hershaw, *Peonage*.

whites. Experts have frequently cited figures as proof of this position. Writing in 1901, W. H. Thomas declared that Negroes constituted 75 per cent of the Southern prison population.¹⁸ Three years later, DuBois estimated that 70 per cent of the prisoners of Southern states were black men.¹⁹ Charles H. McCord, in one of the most thorough studies of the period, found that while the Negro constituted only 12.1 per cent of the population in 1900, he contributed 32.6 per cent of the prisoners enumerated in 1904.²⁰ Mr. G. Croft Williams, Secretary of the South Carolina State Board of Public Welfare, found that the Negro race furnished 78 per cent of the criminal population of thirteen states in 1910, despite the fact that the Negroes constituted only 31 per cent of the population of those states.²¹ In 1924, Skaggs put the Negro proportion of the Southern prison population as high as 85 per cent.²² Although Negroes constituted but 28 per cent of the population of North Carolina (1922-25), there were reported 4.65 indictments per 1,000 whites and 8.71 per 1,000 Negroes.²³ In the Northern states the record is not much better. Professor Asa Martin found that while Negroes comprised less than 10 per cent of the population of Kansas City, Missouri, they furnished more than 25 per cent of the arrests (including 74 per cent of the arrests for murder) in 1911.²⁴ In Cincinnati (1918), they constituted 7 per cent of the population, but furnished 23 per cent of the arrestants.²⁵ During the first six months of 1924, the Negroes of Philadelphia, comprising 7.4 per cent of the population, furnished 24.4 per cent of the arrests.²⁶ Two studies made at Pittsburgh at about the same period show an arrest rate for Negroes 2.15 times as high as for whites.²⁷ The ratio for Detroit for the first six months of 1926 was 3.99 per 10,000 Negroes as compared with 1 per 10,000 whites.²⁸ In the state of Michigan the Negro furnished 18.7 per cent of the prison population, although only 2.6 per cent of the population of

¹⁸ *The American Negro*, 215.

¹⁹ *Some Notes on Negro Crime*, op. cit., 6.

²⁰ *The American Negro as a Dependent, Defective and Delinquent*, 190.

²¹ *The Negro Offender*, 3.

²² Op. cit., 266.

²³ Francis S. Wilder, "Crime in the Superior Courts of North Carolina," *Social Forces*, Mar., 1927, 5:423-7.

²⁴ *Our Negro Population*, 131.

²⁵ James H. Robinson, "The Cincinnati Negro Survey and Program, Nat. Conf. of Social Work, 1919, 524-7.

²⁶ Pennsylvania Dept. of Welfare, *Negro Survey of Pennsylvania*, 69-72.

²⁷ Ibid., 69; Ruth M. Miller, *Negro Delinquency at Pittsburgh*, Ms.

²⁸ Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. ix, 7.

the state were Negroes.²⁹ A study of the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania revealed the fact that Negroes there numbered 575; there would have been only 42 had the Negro contributed to the prison population at the same rate as the white.³⁰ In other words, the frequency of imprisonment was for the Negro and the white as 13.69 to 1. In Chicago, where Negroes constituted 4.5 per cent of the population, they were responsible for 13.1 per cent of the convictions for felonies and 17.1 per cent of the indictments for murder.³¹ In this city the police records for 1919 show nearly three times as many Negroes arrested as whites in proportion to their respective populations. For the six year period ending January 1, 1920, Negro arrests for misdemeanors averaged 8.2 per cent and for felonies 11.13 per cent. Of convictions for misdemeanors Negroes averaged 8.5 per cent and for felonies 13 per cent. The records of the juvenile court show Negro boy offenders, as compared with whites, to be twice their proportion in the population, and girls three and one-half times. Negroes constituted 23 per cent of the population of the state of Illinois at this time.³² In 1929, Negroes constituted 17.1 per cent of the inmates received by all prisons serving Greater New York, although their proportion was only 4.7 per cent. Almost a third of the females received were Negroes.³³ Speaking of the country as a whole the Census Bureau informs us (1923),

Negroes formed 31.3 per cent of the prison population and 23.2 per cent of the commitments as contrasted with 9.3 per cent of the Negroes among the adult population.³⁴

In 1939 Negroes furnished 26.3 per cent of the felony commitments and 25.2 per cent of the misdemeanor commitments.³⁵ Belief in the greater criminality of the Negro is a significant element in the

²⁹ H. A. Lett, "Migration Difficulties in Michigan," *Southern Workman*, May, 1927, 56:231-6.

³⁰ William T. Root, Jr., *A Psychological and Educational Survey of 1916 Prisoners in the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania*, 29.

³¹ Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago*, 330.

³² *Ibid.*, 333-8.

³³ Report of the Dept. of Correction for the year 1929, 133-4. In 1926 Negro women constituted 13 per cent of the total arraigned in the Women's Court for prostitution; in 1927, 19 per cent; 1928, 20 per cent; 1929, 22 per cent. During these years Negro women constituted but 3 to 5 per cent of the total in New York City. W. C. Waterman, *Prostitution and its Repression in New York City, 1900-31*, 130.

³⁴ Bur. of Census, *Prisoners, 1923. Crime Conditions in the United States as Reflected in the Census Statistics of Imprisoned Offenders*, 59.

³⁵ Bur. of Census, *Prisoners in State and Federal Prisons and Reformatories, 1939*, 11.

creation of a racial attitude toward him. This belief is based on the greater proportionate number of arrests of Negroes than whites, the greater number of convictions, the greater number of commitments to penal institutions, and the greater proportion of colored in prison populations. But in considering this avalanche of statistics, the author would remind the reader of a modern version of an old proverb:

Figures must be
Properly compiled,
Adequately presented,
Thoughtfully interpreted,
And even then they lie like hell.

Statistics of arrests do not give an accurate picture of crime. Every year thousands of persons are arrested who have committed no crime, and thousands of others who have committed crimes are never caught. Conclusions based upon the police blotter are faulty to begin with. Racial discrimination tends to distort the picture for there is evidence that the police are more active in suspecting and arresting colored men than white. In its report, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations said,

the testimony is practically unanimous that Negroes are much more liable to be arrested than whites, since police officers share in the general public opinion that Negroes are more criminal than whites.³⁶

Ira De A. Reid declares that whenever holdups and murders are committed in Pittsburgh, Negroes are suspected of participation and arrested in wholesale lots, only to be discharged for lack of evidence.³⁷ If figures concerning arrests were available, says T. J. Woofter, "the number of useless arrests of Negroes would prove astonishing."³⁸ The high rate of Negroes arrested for misdemeanors and discharged—31.1 per cent in Philadelphia and 36.7 per cent in Pittsburgh³⁹—supports this view. Indeed, many colored people believe that employers of convicts urge Southern police to greater activities among Negroes in order to fill up the convict camps, and that the proneness of juries to convict is directly in proportion to the needs of the county for labor.⁴⁰ Furthermore, any

³⁶ *The Negro in Chicago*, 345.

³⁷ *Social Conditions of the Negro in the Hill District of Pittsburgh*, 14.

³⁸ *Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 130. *Vid. Williams, op. cit.*, 106; Scott, *Negro Migration during the War*, 21.

³⁹ Pennsylvania Dept. of Welfare, *op. cit.*, 70; Miller, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History*, 272; Dept. of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, 106.

conclusion based on the number of arrests is likely to be misleading because of the large number of petty offenses punished by short sentences or fines. Here we must expect to find a greater number of arrests due to repeaters. In Minneapolis it was found that between 12 and 15 per cent of the arrestants were repeaters.⁴¹ Unemployed Negroes have been known to request the authorities to send them to the workhouse for the winter. Before their request can be complied with they must be technically "arrested" which, of course, increases the number of arrests for "vagrancy."

The fee system, which is used in several Southern states, may account for the zeal often displayed in arresting and prosecuting Negro misdemeanants. According to this plan, constables and other petty officers receive no regular salaries, but are paid per capita persons arrested. Judges and other officials receive a portion of the court costs. Such officers are tempted to make as much as possible out of their position by frequent arrests of Negroes for petty law violations. Dr. W. H. Oates, State Prison Inspector of Alabama, in his annual report (1914) flayed this practice.

Prisoners are arrested because of the dollar and, shame to say, are frequently kept in captivity for months in steel cages for no other reason than the almighty dollar.⁴²

Milly Lee was a Negro woman convicted of using "abusive language" and fined one dollar and costs. She worked out the fine in two days, but it required nearly a year of labor to satisfy the "costs" consisting of fees to judge, sheriff, clerks and witnesses, totaling \$132.⁴³ It may be objected that this is an extreme case and it is to be hoped that this is true; yet it is beyond question that such a system puts it in the power of greedy officials to fatten upon unfortunates.

The number of convictions is frequently used to indicate comparative criminality of black and white. But accurate results cannot be obtained by this method because, since a large number of persons are never arrested they cannot be convicted. Doubtless many guilty persons are arrested who escape conviction. Furthermore,

it is conceivable that one place may be much more criminal than another though the latter has proportionately more convictions. . . . When Philadelphia's Tenderloin was wide open, it was conceded

⁴¹ Maurine Boie, "An Analysis of Negro Crime Statistics for Minneapolis for 1923, 1924, and 1925," *Opportunity*, June, 1928, 6:171-3.

⁴² Scott, *op. cit.*, 21, quoting Report.

⁴³ Skaggs, *op. cit.*, 244.

that there was much crime. . . . There were fewer arrests and fewer convictions than at a later time when the laws were more rigidly enforced. But there may have been more, rather than less, crime. When the city tried in the popular phrase to close up the resorts the actual convictions for a while increased. The real change was in the enforcing of the law against crime and not in the increase of crime; crime was really on the decrease.

But when there is uniform enforcement, the mere number of convictions would not mean much. An analysis of offenses must be made. . . . If forty men are taken in a crap game and sentenced to five days confinement in the county prison, there are forty arrested and forty convictions; but the amount of criminality represented is comparatively small. . . . On the other hand, a bank official may misuse the funds of his institution and be arrested and convicted. But he counts for only one. . . . The actual bad moral influence of the forty crap shooters is not to be compared with the bank defalcator, but in statistics it appears forty times as great, which is absurd. And of course if the banker escapes on a technicality the absurdity is increased.⁴⁴

Another possible factor affecting the unequal number of convictions is involved in the question as to whether the Negro receives justice in the courts. It is a fact that, as a class, Negroes have lost faith in the integrity of the courts and the fairness of juries, especially where a black and a white man are involved. Dr. DuBois says "accused Negroes are still easily convicted and get long sentences, while whites still continue to escape."⁴⁵ To this Kelly Miller of Howard University agrees, adding that where a black man is involved "accusation is equivalent to condemnation."⁴⁶ Dr. Woofter thinks "he (the Negro) is in many instances likely to receive a summary trial." He sees "a definite tendency on the part of Southern courts to impose heavier sentences than those imposed upon them by Northern courts."⁴⁷ An illustration is the life sentence given a Negro burglar at Birmingham, Alabama, for the theft of \$1.50.⁴⁸ Recently a number of judges and governors in Northern states have refused to return Negro fugitives to the South, asserting that they would not receive a fair trial in Southern courts.⁴⁹ It is frequently asserted that a Negro lawyer does not have a fair chance if the opposing attorney is white, and that a Negro upholds the losing side of a case when his opponent is

⁴⁴ Richard R. Wright, Jr., *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 141-2.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, 6.

⁴⁶ *An Appeal to Reason. Open letter to John Temple Graves*, 15-16.

⁴⁷ *Negro Migration*, 141, 143; *Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 130.

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1936, 26:2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 30, 1936, 12:1; N.A.A.C.P., *Annual Report*, 1941, pp. 22-4.

white.⁵⁰ It is said that white juries are loath to convict whites on Negro testimony and, as a rule, Negroes hesitate to bring cases against whites feeling that not only would they fail to obtain redress but they might direct popular sentiment against themselves.

In no state of the South (says Emmett J. Scott), can a Negro woman get a verdict of seduction, nor in most cases enter a suit against a white man; nor, where a white man is concerned, is the law of consent made to apply to a Negro girl.⁵¹

A French observer thinks there is good reason for such apprehensions since "the statements of the whites are always accepted until they are proved to be false, but a colored man must produce ten times as much evidence."⁵² One English traveler writes, "This is one of the few points on which there is little conflict of evidence—the Negro, in the main, does not get justice in the courts of the South."⁵³

All the evidence seems to indicate that Southern courts do exercise discrimination both for and against the Negro. Judges often discriminate in his favor in cases where the offense indicates a moral lapse of no grave consequence from the point of view of Negro mores. A Southern Negro may commit bigamy with impunity; he may never be indicted. The view of the court is that marital fidelity is an impossible ideal for the Negro. For perjury, fighting, wife beating, desertion of family and seduction of Negro women and girls, generally nothing whatever is done. But let him offend against a person of the white race and a hysteria develops from which the court is by no means immune. A case in point is the trial of the Negro peons in Phillips County, Arkansas, following the race war of 1919. Early in the year, when cotton prices rose, the colored farmers about Elaine organized to employ counsel in an effort to obtain a statement of account and a fair settlement from their landlords. Excited imaginations foresaw a "plot" by Negroes to massacre the whites. When 50,000 rounds of ammunition were discovered at the Branch Normal School, a colored institution at Pine Bluff, suspicion ripened into certainty. Panic-stricken minds forgot that the government had sent military supplies to this place for the use of student army officers. In the race

⁵⁰ W. O. Scroggs, *The Human Way*, 66; Woofter, *Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 134; Edwards, *Twenty-five Years in the Black Belt*, 95.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, 19.

⁵² Andre Siegfried, *America Comes of Age*, 95.

⁵³ William Archer, *Through Afro-America*, 97.

war which followed perhaps a hundred Negroes were killed before the "insurrection" was suppressed. Although feeling in Phillips County was such that a fair trial could not possibly have been held there, the counsel for the defense appointed by the court did not consult their clients, made no request for a change of venue, put no witnesses on the stand, and did not address the jury. The jury was out six minutes and brought in a verdict of guilty against the first five tried. Twelve Negroes were sentenced to electrocution and eighty others to varying terms of imprisonment.⁵⁴

The Scottsboro case in which eight Negro boys were condemned to death is also in point. Tried only a few days after the alleged assault, in an atmosphere dominated by prejudice, and virtually without counsel, it was universally charged that the court proceedings constituted a "legal lynching." In ordering a new trial the Supreme Court of the United States scored the trial judge for his "expansive gesture" in appointing "all the members of the local bar" on the defense.⁵⁵ A second conviction was reversed by presiding Judge Horton as not in accord with the evidence. Nevertheless, an Alabama jury convicted the Negroes a third time after Judge Callahan had ruled out important evidence as "immaterial" and delivered a charge to the jury in which he neglected to instruct them how they might find the defendants "not guilty." This verdict was also set aside by the Supreme Court of the United States and a fourth series of trials was held. The result to date is one defendant under sentence of death,* one to a ninety-nine year term, two to seventy-five years, one to twenty years for assaulting a deputy (the rape charge was withdrawn), and four, with no less evidence against them, were freed without trial. The case against the Scottsboro Negroes rests on the word of two white women, one of whom has repudiated her testimony and charged that the Negroes were "framed." In the first trial the district attorney waved Victoria Price's cotton underwear in the air demanding that the jury convict the Negroes and "defend Southern

* James Weldon Johnson and Herbert J. Seligmann, "Legal Aspects of the Negro Problem," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1928, 140:95; Seligmann, *The Negro Faces America*, 50-2, 224-46; *Tenth Annual Report of the N.A.A.C.P. for 1919*, 36f; Walter White, "The Race Conflict in Arkansas," *Survey*, Dec. 13, 1919, 43:233-4. This case was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, raising the question of "due process of law" in a court dominated by mob atmosphere. The court ordered a new trial and all the Negroes were eventually liberated.

^{**} *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1932, 1:5, 12-13.

* Since the above was written, the death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment.

womanhood." In the fourth trial he was still flourishing the under-garments (though they had now mysteriously changed to silk) and calling on the jury to burn the accused as a rebuke to the machinations of "Jew money" supporting the defense. That note is worth pondering in these days when so much indignation is being registered in the United States over the anti-Semitism of Adolf Hitler. Perhaps the worst circumstance connected with the celebrated case is not the fate of the human jetsam directly involved. What the Negro sees at Scottsboro is not the carefully observed forms of law, but a presiding judge who was perhaps the most energetic member of the prosecution staff, and a foreordained verdict. Under these circumstances, justice becomes a mirage within the reach only of white hands. And what of the State of Alabama? These defendants were held for six years, condemned to death in trial after trial, and suddenly the prosecutor's office found that four were innocent!

As long ago as 1885, George W. Cable pointed out that longer sentences were imposed on Negroes than on whites in Southern courts.⁵⁶ In 1910, 62.6 per cent of all persons serving life terms in Southern states were Negroes; 54.8 per cent of the ten year termers were Negroes; of those serving five to ten years 46 per cent; from two to five years 40.4 per cent; one year 34.7 per cent; and less than one year 13.4 per cent.⁵⁷ The average length of sentence for Negroes and whites respectively in the South Atlantic states was 15.4 and 9.6 years; in the East South Central States, 31.7 and 16.2 years. That is to say, the sentences of Negroes were almost twice as long as those of whites. In studying 1,521 chain gang prisoners in North Carolina, Steiner and Brown found that

7 per cent of the white prisoners and 11 per cent of the Negroes were serving sentences shorter than three months. On the other hand 6 per cent of the white prisoners and 11 per cent of the Negroes were serving sentences of three years or more. This difference in the sentences of the races is quite interesting. The larger percentage of short sentences imposed upon the Negroes as compared with whites probably means that there is a larger percentage of Negroes who are unable to pay a small fine or costs in the case of petty offenses. On the other hand, . . . the chances of receiving a sentence to the roads of three years or longer, are two to one against the Negro as compared with the white man.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *The Silent South*, 152-4.

⁵⁷ U. S. Census: *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, 442.

⁵⁸ Jesse F. Steiner & Roy M. Brown, *The North Carolina Chain Gang*, 61-2.

It should be noted that it is only the friendless Negro who is the victim of Southern injustice. If he has a white employer who will interest himself in the case he has an excellent chance to obtain justice—perhaps something more than justice. Often the planter telephones the sheriff and says, "You've got a nigger of mine in jail, and I wish you'd let him come back and finish picking his crop." That will probably be the end of the case. But if there is no white man to intercede for him his chances are slim, indeed. The disability is only partly racial, for even in the North the poor and ignorant do not possess an equal chance with the rich in matters of litigation. But for the pot to call the kettle black does not cleanse the soot from either. It must be remembered that the Southern Negro is devoid of political power. He has no voice in the selection of judges nor does he, in most counties, sit upon juries.⁵⁹ To that extent he is helpless and must depend for the redress of his wrongs on the ruling white class.

From the data available, it would seem that Northern justice is not "color blind." The Chicago Commission on Race Relations significantly said,

It further appears, from the records and from the testimony of judges in the juvenile, municipal, circuit, superior, and criminal courts, of police officials, the state's attorney, and various experts on crime, probation, and parole, that Negroes are more commonly arrested, subjected to police identification, and convicted than white offenders, that on similar evidence they are generally held and convicted on more serious charges, and that they are given longer sentences.⁶⁰

The Detroit survey shows that 48.9 per cent of the colored defendants in the Recorder's Court were convicted of felonies as compared with 43.8 per cent of the whites. The same discrimination is noticed in Pittsburgh.⁶¹

No doubt there are many white people guilty of crimes who escape conviction through the employment of able counsel. Such an avenue is closed to the Negro since he generally has not the

⁵⁹ It is true that the Supreme Court in the most recent Scottsboro decision (1935) ruled that the barring of Negroes from jury service is a denial of his rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. This is not the first decision of the Court to this effect. But regardless of Court decisions the South is able to keep its jury system "lily white," and it must not be imagined that juries will suddenly become bi-racial. The names of some Negroes may be placed on the jury roll, but a peremptory challenge will remove them from the jury box in most cases.

⁶⁰ *The Negro in Chicago*, 12.

⁶¹ Reid, *op. cit.*, 67; *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. ix.

funds to employ competent legal services, and such talent as he is able to engage cannot hope to compete with the prosecuting attorney who represents the commonwealth. Of the colored prisoners convicted of felonies in Detroit, only 7.1 per cent were given the alternative of a fine or a prison sentence, while 13.5 per cent of the whites received such an alternative. Of the whites 12.2 per cent were given probation; only 7.2 per cent of the Negroes were beneficiaries of such judicial clemency. Proportionately twice as many Negroes (30.9 per cent) as whites (15.5 per cent) were sentenced to prison terms. When misdemeanors alone are studied, the Detroit survey shows that a larger proportion of Negroes than whites were given the alternative of a fine or imprisonment. But 8.5 per cent of the Negroes and 5 per cent of the whites were given jail sentences.⁶²

Commitment statistics are of doubtful value as an index to the comparative criminality of white and colored races, for every discriminatory act from arrest to commitment influences the number of prisoners entering a penal institution. In addition, the court may be forced to use the institution as a substitute for special facilities for treatment, particularly in the case of juvenile offenders. During the first six months of 1923, 13,450 juvenile delinquents were admitted to institutions. Of these 10,762 were white and 2,688 colored; 6.4 per cent of the white delinquents were sent to prisons and reformatories and 12.8 per cent to jails and workhouses, leaving 80.8 per cent for institutions for juvenile delinquents proper. Only 50.6 per cent of the colored children were sent to such special institutions. Prisons and reformatories received 9.5 per cent; jails and workhouses 39.9 per cent.⁶³

Some statisticians prefer to draw their conclusions from institutional population. Here the length of the sentence is significant. Any number of prison inmates will be counted repeatedly. If racial discrimination operates to give Negro prisoners longer sentences than whites, a greater proportion of Negro convicts will be recounted. As we have shown, racial discrimination operates in matters of arrest, conviction, suspended sentence, probation, and prison terms rather than alternative fines. All these, as well as the granting of paroles and pardons, influence prison population; and all operate to the disadvantage of the Negro. Summing up the evidence, Dr. Weatherford says,

⁶² *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. ix, 8ff.

⁶³ Bureau of Census, *Children under Institutional Care*, 1923, 301-2.

Even if arrests were equally justified, trials equally fair, sentences completely equalized, and pardons and paroles equally distributed between white and colored—which of course is a big if—still the number of convictions and the proportion of prison population would not be a fair measure of the Negro's criminal propensities.⁶⁴

In many states the feeble-minded and criminal insane are given special treatment; other states provide no separate facilities for these unfortunates. In such states we may safely assume that these defectives swell the prison population. If, as is often said, there are a greater proportion of these defectives in the colored than in the white race, then the mere counting of prison population loses further significance as an index of comparative criminality.

The conclusion seems obvious that there is a decided discrimination against the Negro on the part of our agencies of criminal justice. Says Dr. Thorsten Sellin of the University of Pennsylvania, This discrimination must always be taken into account when crime statistics dealing with the Negro are interpreted, for it distorts apparent criminality to such a degree that no comparison with the rates for whites is possible unless it be in some way estimated and the rates corrected in the light of the findings.⁶⁵

Notwithstanding all this evidence as to the unreliability of statistics as an index to relative criminality, it may be admitted that, both in the North and South, the Negro race furnishes more work for the criminal courts than his numbers warrant. The outstanding causes of Negro criminality are: (1) the Negro's slavery background, (2) his migration from country to city, (3) a vicious urban environment, (4) adverse economic conditions, and (5) defective family life.

As to slavery background, it is not unnatural that an element which had only vague notions of property rights down to three-quarters of a century ago should contribute many arrests for larceny. Some Negroes often stole because they had little sense of individual ownership. There was no sense of wrong in taking what a white man left within easy reach. It was merely "spoiling the Egyptians." Sexual promiscuity was not illegal among Negro slaves. Since a new-born child had a potential value as a future laborer, there was no reason why the planter should interfere with the increase of his human livestock. Slaves were not always taught to associate sexual promiscuity with immorality. With such a heritage, it is inevitable that numbers of Negro men should not

⁶⁴ Weatherford and Johnson, *op. cit.*, 431-2.

⁶⁵ Thorsten Sellin, "The Negro Criminal," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1928, 140:64.

understand the sanctity of the home or that some Negro women should be slow to recognize the importance of feminine virtue. Nor is it surprising that the Negro sometimes commits sex crimes.

It is axiomatic that more crime is committed in the city than in the rural districts because in the cities the temptations to and the opportunities for crime are greater. When one considers that the Negro migrant of the World War era was plunged suddenly from the simple life of the plantation into the complex life of the city, it is not surprising that some should have had difficulty in making the adjustment. Many were young without family ties. Congestion contributed to lack of privacy and led to sex disorders. There was an absence of recreational facilities. Yet, probably for the first time in his life, the Negro was receiving higher wages than he could judiciously spend. It is natural that he should frequent saloons, gambling joints and dens of vice, and fall afoul of the law because of it. A drunken Negro is a quarrelsome Negro. Furthermore, the illiterate Negro from the rural South had no knowledge of city ordinances or sanitary regulations, and he settled his private difficulties with his own two fists as he had always done.

The limitations imposed on Negro residential areas have produced undue cause of crime. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations found that 90 per cent of the Negro population of that city were living in and near the city's former segregated vice districts,

partly because white sentiment excluded them from other neighborhoods, partly because rents in the neighborhoods of vice were low enough to meet their meager economic resources, and partly because their weakness made their protests against the proximity of vice less effective than the protests of the whites.⁶⁶

Crime is more prevalent among white people who live amid slum conditions than it is among well-to-do whites.

Industrial conditions have a profound influence on crime, and especially on Negro crime, because of the greater liability of Negroes to unemployment and the fact that when employed they live closer to the margin of existence. They are the lowest paid of all American workers. They are the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Since the depression released proportionately more Negroes than whites to the ranks of the unemployed, it is natural

⁶⁶ *The Negro in Chicago*, 622.

that the former should show an increase of criminality. It hardly requires an argument to prove that men and women, irrespective of race, when cold and hungry will steal and commit other acts to provide food and shelter for their families and themselves. By the same token, the inability to secure employment except at poorly paid servant's wages contributes to the high rate of prostitution among Negro women.

The Negro criminal class is noticeably younger than the white criminal class, and the race contributes a much greater proportion of juvenile delinquents than the white. A study by the Welfare Council of New York City developed the fact that while Negro children represented but 3.5 per cent of the child population, they contributed 10.3 per cent to the total delinquency.⁶⁷ According to a 1925 study of delinquent and neglected children in New York, the largest number of delinquents fall between the ages of thirteen and sixteen years. Disorderly conduct and desertion from home seem to be the outstanding causes of delinquency among Negro boys, while the most numerous offenses booked against white boys were larceny and burglary. In the case of delinquent Negro girls, waywardness or desertion from home were the charges in 85 per cent of the cases.⁶⁸ Negro children are frequently used by the "fence" to dispose of stolen goods. This indicates that the contributing causes of delinquency in Negro children are environmental and not inherent. The necessity which compels so many Negro women to work is an important factor, for the children are left at home without proper supervision.⁶⁹ They oversleep, arrive tardily at school, or perhaps remain away altogether. Idleness leads to contact with vicious characters, temptation and the breaking down of morale. In many cases it has been observed that the over-crowding which characterizes the Negro quarter has the effect of driving the children into the streets for recreation or to questionable places of amusement. Paul Blanshard, executive director of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, said :

If the youth of these areas had more wholesome recreation they

⁶⁷ *New York Times*, June 23, 1937, 27:2.

⁶⁸ Joint Committee on Negro Child Study in New York City, *A Study of Delinquent and Neglected Negro Children*, 6.

⁶⁹ *Vid.* W. D. Weatherford, *A Survey of the Negro Boy in Nashville, Tennessee*, 78.

would be kept off the streets and be less susceptible to influences that make for criminality.⁷⁰

All studies agree that provision for institutional care among this class of delinquents is inadequate. Justice John Warren Hill of the Children's Court, New York City, declared that lack of sufficient funds for probation services was an important factor in the rise of juvenile crime rate in Harlem.⁷¹ Lack of classification makes the jails in many Northern states training schools for criminals, and brutal treatment in the Southern chain gang hardens the first offender into a habitual criminal.

The very high percentage of crime among colored women calls for consideration. In the first six months of 1920, the number of Negro females committed to penal institutions was nearly equal to the number of white females, although they comprised only one-tenth of the population.⁷² Drunkenness, disorderly conduct, fighting, lewdness, promiscuity, and prostitution are the charges usually booked against them. Jealousy is a frequent cause of quarrels and bad whisky was so potent a factor in criminality that the Southern states were the first to declare for prohibition. A plant official told the Chicago Commission on Race Relations that his plant had dismissed more than five hundred Negro girls for business reasons. These girls, it was stated, could not easily find reemployment and were therefore probably exposed to temptations from which white girls of comparable status were exempt.⁷³

The abolition of poverty among Negroes, the increase in opportunities to earn a living will lift large numbers of them above the criminal level, for crime, like disease, may be accounted for mainly by the penury of the people. Education and the introduction of modern methods of dealing with criminals will do much to reduce Negro criminality. This involves the abolition of the chain gang, classification of criminals and the separation of first offenders from habitual criminals, and the institution of impartial systems of probation and parole. Legal aid, wisely administered, can do much to correct the injustice from which the Negro suffers in our courts. At Tulsa, Oklahoma, the local committee of the Interracial Relations Commission procured legal assistance for Negroes endeavoring to collect insurance on property destroyed in the 1921 riot; in

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1941, 50:1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1941, 25:8.

⁷² Bur. of Census, *Prisoners, 1923*, 58.

⁷³ *The Negro in Chicago*, 332.

a Georgia town it secured the release of a Negro boy from peonage; in another Georgia town it prevented fraudulent foreclosure on a Negro's farm; in other cases it has defended Negro tenants against the exactions of unscrupulous landlords, rescued them from the clutches of attorneys who charged exorbitant fees and rendered little service.⁷⁴ Since the machinery of justice, like the machinery of government, is in the hands of the white man it is his responsibility to render justice.

The right to a fair trial by an impartial jury of peers is one of the bed-rocks upon which freedom rests, and if it cannot be preserved when the courts serve two races, then democracy itself rests on quicksand.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Robert L. Duffus, "Counter-mining the Ku Klux Klan," *World's Work*, July, 1923, 46:275-84.

⁷⁵T. J. Woofter, Jr., *Basis of Racial Adjustment*, 125.

CHAPTER XI

THE MOB

Contrary to popular opinion, lynching did not have its origin on Southern soil. The custom was a product of frontier communities where organized courts were rare and lawlessness was such that justice needed to be speedily administered. The Regulators of Revolutionary days and the California Vigilantes of the gold rush era come to mind at once. Horse stealing was the crime which at one time was most often punished in Judge Lynch's court, and it is said that during the decade 1875-1886 more men were shot and hanged in Wyoming, Montana and Nebraska than have been legally executed in any six states ever since. Lynching began to be common in the South during reconstruction days. A condition of lawlessness was chronic, and the rape of white women by Negroes was not an infrequent occurrence. The Negro who asserted himself was considered by the whites as a criminal. The greater part of the whites were disfranchised for participation in rebellion, and Negro juries were loath to convict members of their race. The failure of state governments to enforce old laws persuaded many persons that lynching was the only way in which the wilfulness of the Negro could be curbed.

Prior to 1882 no record of the number of lynchings was kept. Since that date the Chicago *Tribune* has kept a continuous record. More recently the Department of Records of Tuskegee Institute and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People also have kept lists. The number of lynchings in each list varies slightly. Occasionally there is a point of difference as to what constitutes a "lynching." Some of the atrocities counted as "lynchings" in some lists have been omitted from others because they were thought to be "murders." Doubtless there were many lynchings in the '80s and '90s which did not get into the records at all. The South is large and the rural districts have not always been in close touch with the city dailies. According to the *World Almanac*, 4,673 persons met death by lynching

from 1889 to 1936.¹ If we add the eight lynchings of 1937, the seven of 1938, the four of 1939, the five of 1940, the five of 1941, and the five of 1942 we have a total of 4,707.* The record year was 1892 with 255 lynchings; the lowest number was 1939 with four. Of the victims, at least 993 were white. The figures show that while the number of lynchings has decreased, the proportion of Negro victims has increased.

Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama enjoy the doubtful fame of heading the lynching list. These five states have furnished nearly half the total victims. For half a century Mississippi and Georgia have run neck and neck for first place. At present Mississippi holds the blue ribbon, contributing 573 lynchings since 1822, while Georgia has 520. Texas follows with 489, Louisiana with 390, and Alabama with 346. Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia are comparatively free with 1, 21 and 32, respectively. The other Southern states range between the two groups, although Oklahoma has a disproportionate share when the Negro element in her population is considered.

Apologists for lynching rest their defense of the practice on the necessity of defending womanhood against the "nameless crime," although the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, headed by George Fort Milton of Chattanooga, declares that fewer than one-fourth of the persons lynched since 1890 were accused of attacks on women.² Authorities have repeatedly called attention to the fact that sex crimes are not the chief cause of lynching. Certainly the 96 female victims of mob violence could not have been rapists. In the years 1871-73 inclusive, Cutler found a total of 75 lynchings. Of these only four Negroes and one white man were put to death for rape or attempted rape, while ten Negroes and twenty-three whites were lynched for murder.³ George P. Upton, associate editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, lists 2,874 lynchings between 1885 and 1904. Of these 564 were charged with rape or attempted rape and 136 others with rape and murder; while 1,277 were charged with murder, 326 with theft, burglary or robbery, 106 with arson, and 134 were lynched for no ascertainable reason.⁴ Dr. Willis Duke Weatherford analyzed the 212 lynch-

¹ *World Almanac*, 1938, 278. According to the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, the figures for the same period would be 3,793. Cf. *Lynchings and what they mean*, p. 9.

* Since there is doubt as to whether a number of the recent atrocities are "lynchings," various sources will give different totals.

² New York *Times*, Nov. 10, 1931, 27:1; Southern Commission, *op. cit.*, 19.

³ James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch Law*, 151.

⁴ Quoted by Kelly Miller, *An Appeal to Reason. Open letter to John Temple Graves*, Oct., 1906.

ings of 1919-21 and found that 69 were for murder, 55 for rape or attempted rape, 8 for insult to white women and 80 for minor crimes or no defined crime.⁵ Nine of the 84 mob victims in the 1931-35 period were not accused of any crime: twenty-five others were accused of minor offenses. The minor crimes for which Negroes have been lynched include "failing to stop an automobile when ordered," "being active in politics," "quarreling with a white man," "disobedience to quarantine regulations," "voodooism," "violation of contract," "resisting arrest," "concealing persons accused of crime," "talking back," "throwing stones," "shooting at rabbits," "stealing peaches," "mistaken identity," "trying to act like a white man," "resisting illegal search of home," "inability to pay his wife's funeral bill," and "being a bad nigger." In 1919 a Negro was burned to death because he was acquitted by the courts of shooting a policeman. Not satisfied with the conduct of the United States Supreme Court which granted an appeal to a Negro accused of a capital crime, a mob at Chattanooga took the accused from jail and hanged him to a pier on the county bridge. Occasionally a Negro has been strung up for daring to give evidence against a white man in court; others have been shot for refusing to give evidence. The sin of a Negro woman who had fine splinters run into her body and was then slowly burned alive by white "gentlemen" in Mississippi was simply that the mob had failed to capture her husband. Even the uniform of the United States fails to offer protection. On April 3, 1941, Private Felix Hall, an army volunteer, was found hanging to a tree near Fort Benning, Georgia.^{5a}

Fear is one of the fundamental causes of lynching, for though the "sex myth" can be exploded by figures it has been repeated so often that many people doubtless believe most victims of lynching parties to be rapists.

In some sections an unaccompanied white woman dislikes to walk through an unlighted village street at night; she hesitates to drive along a lonely country road in broad daylight without a pistol near her hand; and she does not dare to walk through the woods alone. The rural districts are poorly policed and the ears of the farmer working in the fields are always alert for the sound of the bell or the horn calling for help, perhaps from his own home.⁶

⁵ W. D. Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America*, 359. Cf. *Literary Digest*, Nov. 21, 1931, 111: 10; B. T. Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 185-8; *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1923.

^{5a} *Negro Handbook*, 52.

⁶ Holland, Thompson, *The New South*, 152-3.

This constant fear is fundamental in the background of race relations. Stimulated by suggestion, the female is in an expectant mood and may

imagine advances being made without their ever occurring . . . An accidental meeting on a lonely road with a Negro, a look, a chance contact, and the whole mechanism of fear and expectancy is set in motion. The girl screams; the Negro runs. In the excitement that follows the thing that actually happened is forgotten. A story gets itself built up; all the emotions that have been roused come to the front. Only one thing will pacify the community; the emotions demand their full satisfaction. They will not be denied.⁷

Lack of an emotional outlet plus race prejudice are important causes of lynching. Judge Lynch flourishes principally in the smaller towns and isolated rural communities where the people are illiterate and where there is a noticeable lack of recreation. The people who compose mobs in such neighborhoods are small land-holders, tenants and wage workers. Their economic status is comparable to that of the Negro and they frequently find black men competitors. In the days of slavery the poor whites hated the Negro with a passion that was truly venomous. Their grandsons, having little in which they may glory, pride themselves on their Anglo-Saxon ancestry and their hatred of the blacks. They bitterly resent any progress which the "inferior race" has made. Their starved emotions make the raising of a mob a quick and simple process, and racial antagonism makes "nigger killing" superior to any other local amusement. Dr. Weatherford has pointed out that there are counties in which lynching has become epidemic. In Shelby County, Tennessee, three Negroes were lynched in 1892, one in 1893, and six in 1894. Lauderdale County, in the same state, had a lynching in 1898, four in 1900, one in 1903, and one in 1904. Cooke County had one lynching each in 1900, 1901, 1907, three in 1908, and two in 1910. Lamar County, Texas, hanged four men in 1892, and other lynchings occurred in the same county in 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1901. Grimes County, Texas, had lynchings in 1890, 1892, 1893, 1914 and 1917.⁸ Between 1889 and 1922 Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, had nineteen lynchings, Caddo Parish eighteen, Bossier fifteen, Morehouse thirteen, Marion County, Florida, thirteen, Hinds and Washington Counties, Mississippi, twelve each, Alachua, Madison and Polk Counties, Florida, and Richland, Lou-

⁷ Frank Tannenbaum, *Darker Phases of the South*, 36.

⁸ Weatherford & Johnson, *op. cit.*, 436.

isiana, eleven each; Jefferson, Alabama, and DeSoto and Lauderdale, Mississippi, ten each.⁹ The list could be lengthened considerably.

No pains are spared to give the audience a thrill at a modern *auto-da-fe*, and the mob frequently shows considerable ingenuity in accomplishing its purpose. One Texas mob burned a man in a courthouse vault; another dragged a dead Negro behind a truck and burned the body in front of a Negro church; in Oklahoma a man was stabbed to death in jail; in Georgia an insane man was beaten to death in a hospital; in Texas one end of a rope was attached to a bridge, the other to the victim's neck, and he was tossed over the bridge. At Perry, Georgia, Lee Green was forced to climb a tree with a rope round his neck and ordered to jump. A Tennessee mob tied a fifteen-year-old boy to a train; Georgia and Tennessee mobs disemboweled pregnant women; Mississippi dismembered two boys and burned their parts; Louisiana sewed a man in a sack, weighted it with stone and threw him into a lake. South Carolina took three Negroes for a ride into the country and told them to run, shooting them in the back when at a convenient distance. Mississippi buried a man up to the neck, placed a steel cage over his head and introduced a bulldog into the cage. In 1931 a Missouri mob invented something new when it chained Raymond Gunn to the top of a schoolhouse at Maryville "so that everyone present may see without crowding" and applied the torch. Sometimes advance information of the intended lynching is published in the newspapers. "3,000 WILL BURN NEGRO," screamed the New Orleans *States* in large red type across the front page on June 26, 1919. Its readers were informed that a committee of citizens at Ellisville, Mississippi, had been appointed to make "arrangements for the lynching" of John Hatfield and that "the officers who had him in charge had agreed to turn him over to the mob at 4 o'clock in the afternoon." Governor Bilbo was quoted as saying that an overwhelming public sentiment made him powerless to interfere. The Jackson *Daily News* of the same day also mentioned the coming event and announced the lynching for five o'clock.¹⁰ Claude Neal was done to death on October 28, 1934. Fifteen hours' notice of the intended lynching was given over the radio. The New York *Times* of the preceding day told of the crowds, estimated at from four to seven thousand, who had gathered

⁹ Survey, Feb. 15, 1923, 49: 626.

¹⁰ Herbert J. Seligmann, *The Negro Faces America*, 25; Report N. A. A. C. P. for 1919, 21, 24. Cf. Memphis *Press*, Jan. 26, 1921.

at the appointed place to witness the killing. Many of them came by automobile from adjoining states. The Negro was already in the hands of the mob.¹¹

If we take into account the brutality with which the decrees of "mob law" have been executed, we must turn to the Balkan and Armenian massacres to find a parallel. This increasing brutality may be partially attributed to the First World War which accustomed us to horror and partly to the necessity of new thrills. As the drug addict demands increasing quantities to get the desired result, so does the lyncher require new savagery. Relatively painless hanging and shooting no longer satisfy. A Mississippi mob killed Luther Holbert and his wife with corkscrews.

This instrument was bored into the flesh of the man and woman, in the arms, legs and body, and then pulled out, the spirals tearing out big pieces of raw, quivering flesh every time it was withdrawn.¹²

There is nothing to indicate that the woman had any part in the crime for which she and her husband died. Jim McIlherron, also of Mississippi, was tortured with a red hot crowbar.¹³ In 1921 Henry Lowry was burned to death over a slow fire at Nodena, Arkansas.

More than 500 persons stood by and looked on while the Negro was slowly burned to a crisp (the newspaper dispatches state). Inch by inch the Negro was fairly cooked to death. Every few minutes fresh leaves were tossed on the funeral pyre until the blaze had passed the Negro's waist Even after the flesh had dropped away from his legs and the flames were leaping toward his face, Lowry retained consciousness As the flames were eating away his abdomen, a member of the mob stepped forward and saturated the body was gasoline.¹⁴

Nine months later a mob, including women and children, slowly roasted a Negro at Hubbard, Texas, meanwhile augmenting his sufferings by jabbing sticks into his mouth, nose and eyes.¹⁵ In 1937, a mob at Duck Hill, Mississippi, tortured two Negroes with a blow torch before shooting them.¹⁶ Associated press dispatches

¹¹ *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 1934, 32: 2; Oct. 28, 1934, 31: 1.

¹² *New York Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1904.

¹³ *The Crisis*, Apr., 1918, 270.

¹⁴ *Memphis Press*, Jan. 27, 1921; William Pickens, "The American Congo—Burning of Henry Lowry," *Nation*, Mar. 23, 1921, 112: 426-8.

¹⁵ Charles F. Carter, "The Lynching Infamy," *Current Hist.*, Mar., 1922, 15: 897-902.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1937, 52:2; Apr. 16, 1937, 8:3.

frequently recount the ghastly details of crowds morbidly raking the ashes for charred bones or links of the chain that bound the unfortunate victim to the funeral pyre. Occasionally fingers, toes and ears have been cut off the living wretch and distributed for souvenirs. Photographs are quickly sold out. These pictures reveal boys and girls and women about to become mothers in the crowd.

A third cause for the prevalence of lynching has been the attitude of some high officials in Southern states who have ridden into power on a platform of race prejudice. Ben Tillman and Cole Blease of South Carolina, Hoke Smith of Georgia, Hefflin of Alabama, Vardaman and Bilbo of Mississippi are examples of the type. During the canvass of 1892, Benjamin R. Tillman, then candidate for governor, declared himself ready to "lead a mob to lynch the Negro who ravishes a white woman." When the first lynching of his administration did occur, that of John Peterson at Denmark, the *Columbia State* and a mass meeting of Columbia citizens accused the governor of connivance with the mob.¹⁷ The Governor's attitude may have been partly responsible for the sixteen lynchings in South Carolina during his second term. Dennis Murphree, Governor of Mississippi, once prevented a lynching at Jackson by mobilizing the national guard. The Negro involved was hanged by due process of law. But Governor Murphree was defeated for reelection by more than 10,000 votes. He was succeeded by Governor Bilbo, and thirteen lynchings occurred during his administration. Bilbo stopped at Parchman, Mississippi, to view what remained of the burned corpse of Charley Shepherd. But his reply when urged to conduct an investigation of the affair was "I have neither the time nor the money to investigate two thousand people."¹⁸ On another occasion he responded to the telegram of a Negro association protesting against a lynching with the brief but emphatic words, "Go to hell." When governor of South Carolina, Cole L. Blease once said to a mob leader, "I will turn you loose when charged with lynching a Negro who is accused of assault on a white woman." On another occasion he is reported to have said,

I will never order out the militia to shoot down their neighbors and protect a black brute who commits the nameless crime against a white woman. Therefore in South Carolina let it be understood

¹⁷ *Columbia State*, Apr. 26, 1893.

¹⁸ *Nation*, Jan. 16, 1929, 128: 62.

that when a Negro assaults a white woman, all that is needed is that they get the right man, and they who get him will never stand trial.¹⁹

As late as the summer of 1930, when Blease was asking the electorate of his state to return him to the United States Senate, speaking at Union, South Carolina, the scene of a lynching not long before, he said: "Whenever the Constitution comes between men and the virtue of the white women of South Carolina, I say to hell with the Constitution."²⁰

The attitude of the sheriff is frequently in line with that of the governor. At Cartersville, Georgia, a deputy unlocked the cell of John W. Clark and permitted an unarmed mob to take him away and lynch him. Neither Sheriff Gaddes nor his deputies attempted to stop the lynching.²¹ Sheriff Poppell of McIntosh County, Georgia, remarked after the lynching of George Grant, "I don't know who killed the Negro and I don't give a damn."²² At Walhalla, South Carolina, mobs gathered on two nights preceding the lynching of Allen Green. Yet no effort was made to remove the prisoner or to provide adequate protection for the jail. Mayor Alvin Jones is quoted as saying, "If my night man interferes I'll take his badge off."²³ There is good reason to doubt that Green committed the crime for which he died.

At Sherman, Texas, the sheriff, the police, the Texas Rangers, and the National Guard were all on the scene, and all failed to make any effective resistance.²⁴

Governor Moody had ordered the Rangers to "protect the Negro but don't shoot!"^{24a} Sheriff England of Maryville, Missouri, permitted a mob to take Raymond Gunn without a struggle. He did not use his revolver and although the National Guard, mobilized to protect Gunn, was at its armory only a block away, the sheriff never called for assistance. England said he did not feel like "sending them against the crowd."²⁵ In January, 1935, eight

¹⁹ Elijah C. Branch, *Judge Lynch's Court in America*, 63.

²⁰ Chicago *Defender*, July 19, 1930. When Gov. Cary of Wyoming asked Blease how he reconciled his attitude with the oath he had taken, as governor, to uphold the laws and constitution of his state, he responded in nearly the same words. Branch, 68; Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, 293.

²¹ New York *Times*, Oct. 2, 1930, 13: 3; Oct. 5, 1930, iii, 6: 1.

²² *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1930, iii, 6: 2.

²³ Raper, *op. cit.*, 275.

²⁴ "Report of Interracial Commission," *Literary Digest*, July 19, 1930, 106: 22.

^{24a} *Crisis*, Jan., 1936, 43: 17.

²⁵ Raper, *op. cit.*, 421-4.

men entered the Washington Parish (La.) jail and riddled Jerome Wilson with bullets. "There wasn't any lynching," said Sheriff J. L. Brock. "There was just six or eight men who were going about their business." Huey Long declared that there was nothing he could do. It wouldn't "do the dead nigga no good."²⁶ Associated Press accounts would indicate that Sheriff Thigpen of Ruston, Louisiana, actually collaborated with the lynchers (Oct. 13, 1938), making a gentlemen's agreement with its unmasked leaders to permit the mob to keep the prisoner a few more minutes. Then the sheriff "smoked a cigarette or two" while the mob tortured the victim with a red-hot poker and then hanged and shot him.²⁷ Despite clear indications of a lynching atmosphere (the mob had already seized the Negro, shot and left him for dead), the sheriff of Quincey, Florida, provided no guard for A. C. Williams when he placed him in an ambulance for transportation to a hospital twenty-five miles away. A car overtook the ambulance, removed the wounded prisoner from his stretcher and killed him.²⁸ After a mob in Colorado County, Texas, had hanged two negro boys, fifteen and sixteen years old (Nov., 1935), county attorney O. P. Moore said: "I do not call the citizens who executed the Negroes a mob. I consider their action an expression of the will of the people."²⁹ Said Sheriff Pitts, after the Arabi, Georgia, lynching, "the case is closed as far as I am concerned."³⁰ When a special grand jury, empaneled to investigate the Ruston, Louisiana, lynching, failed to return an indictment, Judge Walker dismissed it saying that he felt the jury had "fully and honorably discharged" its duty.³¹

Happily such spineless action does not always obtain. In North Carolina, Governor Aycock called out troops fifteen times to protect prisoners from lynching parties, Governor Glenn three times, Kitchin twice, Craig four times, Bickett five times, and Morrison thirteen times.³² As a consequence of such determined action North Carolina's place in the lynching column is lower than that of most Southern states. Governor A. O. Stanley of Kentucky prevented a lynching by chartering a special train and starting for the scene with the words, "I'll give the mob a chance to

²⁶ Carlton Beals and Abel Plum, "Louisiana's Black Utopia," *Nation*, Oct. 30, 1935, 141: 503-5.

²⁷ *Crisis*, Nov. 1938, 361; Jan. 1939, 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, June, 1941, 183; *New York Times*, May 14, 1941, 12:6.

²⁹ *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1935, 3:6; *Literary Digest*, Nov. 23, 1935.

³⁰ *New York Times*, July 10, 1938, 4:5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1938, 24:4.

³² R. D. W. Connor, *North Carolina, Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth, 1584-1925*, 347-8.

lynch the governor of Kentucky first."³³ In the very year that Governor Bilbo was unable to prevent the burning of Hatfield, prompt action by authorities did prevent lynchings at eleven places in various parts of the South.³⁴ The Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching found 448 attempts at lynching prevented by prompt action of officers and citizens during the ten years ending with 1929.³⁵ Twenty-two outbreaks of mob violence were prevented in the year 1940. In twenty-one cases the prisoners were removed to safer quarters, guards were augmented, or other precautions taken. In one case would-be lynchers were repelled by armed force.³⁶

It would be a grave error to conclude that lynching is a sectional crime. Frank U. Quillin, in his *Color Line in Ohio*, counted five lynchings in that state between 1894 and 1904.³⁷ On March 7, 1904, a mob at Springfield, Ohio, removed a Negro from the county jail, slaughtered him in cold blood at the doorway, dragged his body through the streets and hanged it to a telegraph pole after riddling it with bullets. On February 26, 1906, and March 10, 1910, there were race riots in the same city in which the Negro quarters were burned.³⁸ On August 14-15, 1908, there was a race riot at Springfield, Illinois. The Negroes whom the mob desired had been removed to a place of safety. That did not prevent two other Negroes from being lynched. The offense of one was that he had been living with a white wife for thirty years; it is not yet known why the mob hanged the other.³⁹ At Coatesville, Pennsylvania, Zack Walker, tied to a bed in a hospital, was carried out by a mob, thrown on a wood pile drenched in oil and burned alive. Early in August, 1930, a mob stormed the jail at Marion, Indiana, and hanged two Negro boys on the courthouse lawn while several hundred of the town's leading citizens looked serenely on.

The excitement of the war years produced a crop of race riots which, in number and atrocity, were beyond precedent in the United States. "We are being drafted to protect France from German atrocities," said one Negro, "yet we weren't able to protect our own people from atrocities at home." Fearing that the world might become safe for democracy, Southern whites seemed

³³ Survey, Jan. 20, 1917, 37:461; Independent, Jan. 22, Feb. 26, 1917, 89: 135, 347-8.

³⁴ Report N.A.A.C.P. for 1919, 29.

³⁵ Literary Digest, Nov. 21, 1931, 111:10.

³⁶ New York Times, Dec. 31, 1940, 13:6.

³⁷ Pp. 115-16.

³⁸ Quillin, *Color Line in Ohio*, 116-17.

³⁹ Outlook, Aug. 22, 1908, 89:869.

more opposed to "social equality" than ever. Describing returned Negro soldiers as "French-women-ruined" and believing that "the mob is the only protection of the white man's home," ex-Senator Vardaman called on "the bravest of the brave" in Mississippi to organize "since there is no doubt that hell will be to pay in this country in the near future."⁴⁰ The Imperial Wizard revived the Ku Klux Klan, and sheeted riders once more stalked silently through the streets. In 1917 and 1918 there were riots at East St. Louis, Chester (Pennsylvania), Philadelphia, and Houston. In 1919 race riots were reported at twenty-six cities. The most spectacular clashes occurred at Chicago, Washington, Omaha, Knoxville, Longview (Texas), and Elaine (Arkansas). Riots occurred at Duluth, Independence (Kansas), and Ocoee (Florida), in 1920, and at Springfield (Ohio), and Tulsa (Oklahoma) in 1921. At Birmingham (Alabama), Memphis, Columbus (South Carolina), and Homestead (Pennsylvania), conflicts were narrowly averted.

Several of these riots grew out of newspaper propaganda in which Negro crime was sensationalized. For a month before the Washington riot, newspapers called attention to Negro crimes in glaring headlines. The Washington *Post* spoke of the nation's capital as "the most lawless city in the Union." "Crimes against women," "many assaults," "daylight hold-ups" and "other outrages" created a condition of hysteria and incited a general attack upon Negroes. The latter armed themselves and fought back. In the race war seven persons were killed and the injured mounted to hundreds. After the excitement had subsided it was found that there had been four attempts at rape in the District of Columbia on June 25, 28, 30 and July 18. Three of these were supposed to have been committed by a single suspect who was under arrest at the time. Yet the inflammatory headlines gave the impression of a "wave of crime" in which no woman was safe.⁴¹ A similar situation preceded the riot at Omaha. Gen. Wood, on taking charge after the riot, stated that the responsibility rested upon a few individuals and one newspaper. East St. Louis was prepared for her bloody riot by a similar sensational deluge of the press. The Tulsa riot, according to the adjutant general of Oklahoma, was precipitated by "an impudent Negro, a hysterical girl, and a yellow journal." The Negro quarter was destroyed

⁴⁰ *Literary Digest*, Aug. 2, 1918, 62:25.

⁴¹ *Outlook*, Aug. 6, 1919, 112:532-4.

by deliberately kindled fires and thousands of persons were rendered homeless and penniless.⁴²

Other outbreaks were fundamentally economic. Such were the riots at East St. Louis, Chicago and Omaha. The first developed out of the employment of Negroes as strike breakers. In the course of the conflict the mob fired the homes of the black folk and would not permit them to leave their burning houses. More than a hundred Negroes were killed, among them a two-year-old child who was shot and tossed into the doorway of a burning building.⁴³ The Chicago riot was caused by the employment of non-union Negroes at the stockyards and elsewhere, the invasion of white residential districts and hostility arising from the part played by the Negro vote in electing an unpopular city administration. A conflict at a bathing beach was the lighted match which fired the powder train. By tacit understanding Negro bathers were restricted to a certain part of this beach. On the afternoon of Sunday, July 27, a Negro boy on a raft floated across the custom-created line. He was met with a shower of stones, finally fell off the raft and was drowned. His body showed no stone bruises but rumor had it that he had been hit and drowned as a result. Several Negro witnesses pointed out a white assailant, but the policeman at the beach refused to make the arrest. Race antagonism was aflame. Several conflicts occurred during the afternoon. On the following day whites living between the stock yards and the "black belt" attacked Negro workers who were returning home. Negro mobs formed for retaliation. Criminal elements on both sides invaded the territory of the other. Revolver shots were fired from automobiles driven through Negro neighborhoods. For seven days, Chicago was in the hands of a mob during which time thirty-eight persons (23 Negroes and 15 whites) were killed, and 537, including 178 whites, were injured.⁴⁴ Although "crimes against women" had their part in stirring up the riot at Omaha, the President of the Nebraska State Federation of Labor had much to say of the importation of non-union Negroes by the "great employers of labor, including the packers" to "break down the wages of white labor."⁴⁵

Sometimes, though not so frequently as formerly, race riots

⁴² *Nation*, June 15, 1921, 112:839.

⁴³ *Riot at East St. Louis, Ill.* Hearing before Committee on Rules, H. R., 65 Cong., 1 sess., House J. R. No. 118; *East St. Louis Riots*. Report of the special committee authorized by Congress to investigate the East St. Louis riots, July 15, 1918, 65 Cong., 2 sess.

⁴⁴ Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *op. cit.*, 1-7.

⁴⁵ H. J. Seligman, *op. cit.*, 170-1.

are political. This was true of the Ocoee riot which started as the result of an attempt to prevent Mose Norman, a colored man, from voting although he was fully qualified under the law and owned an orange grove worth \$10,000. Driven from the polls, Norman went to the home of another colored man, Jule Perry. The house was surrounded, twenty Negro homes were ultimately burned, Perry was lynched and a number of Negroes burned to death.⁴⁶

Recent race riots have been characterized by a new attitude on the part of Negroes. At Washington, Chicago, Elaine and Tulsa the Negro masses manifested a determination to fight back. The casualty lists contained whites as well as Negroes. This militant attitude is in striking contrast to the doctrine of passive resistance of which Booker T. Washington was once the spokesman. At the time of the Atlanta riot (1906), he wrote

I would especially urge the colored people in Atlanta and elsewhere to exercise self-control and not make the fatal mistake of attempting to retaliate, but to rely upon the efforts of the proper authorities to bring order and security out of confusion. If they do this they will have the sympathy of good people the world over.⁴⁷

But the World War had produced a different Negro who found his rifle of more service in protecting his home than the "proper authorities."

The outstanding fact in almost every lynching is that nothing is ever done about it. In his recent book, *Lynching and the Law*, Prof. J. H. Chadbourne points out that in thirty years only sixty-seven convictions have been obtained in twelve cases.⁴⁸ This is not because mobsters are master minds, skilled in the evasion of detection. Mobs are frequently unmasked, but rarely are witnesses able to identify them. The ringleaders are generally known. It would be easy to supply photographs of most lynchings. The newspapers published three photographs of the lynching of Jim Ivy⁴⁹ in which the faces of at least a hundred members of the mob were distinguishable. Yet the coroner's jury returned the verdict that Ivy had come to his death "at the hands of a mob, the members of which are unknown," this despite the fact that some individuals publicly admitted taking part in it. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People furnished Gov-

⁴⁶ Walter F. White, "Election by terror in Florida," *New Republic*, Jan. 12, 1921, 25: 195-7.

⁴⁷ N. Y. *Age*, Sept. 27, 1906.

⁴⁸ Chadbourne, *Lynching and the Law*, 13.

⁴⁹ Memphis *News-Scimitar*, Sept. 20, 1925.

ernor Richards with the names and addresses of the Loman lynchers, but the grand jury refused to return indictments. The mob which lynched Elbert Williams at Brownsville, Tennessee (June 20, 1940), contained two bank officials, several police officers, a state highway commissioner, and several merchants.⁵⁰ Although the *Daily Worker* and the *Baltimore Post* had published the names of the leaders of the mob which lynched George Armwood at Princess Anne, Maryland (Oct. 18, 1933), the local authorities refused to arrest them. After considerable delay, Governor Ritchie ordered state troops to make the arrests. Four persons were taken into custody, and the officers fought a battle with a second mob formed to release the prisoners. The next day all the prisoners were released on writs of *habeas corpus*. None were ever indicted or brought to trial. State authorities are powerless to punish mob violence in the face of local opposition. Investigating seventeen lynchings, grand juries indicted 146 persons between 1922 and 1926. Ten were sent to the penitentiary in 1922, two in 1923, five persons were given jail sentences in 1924. In 1925 five persons received suspended sentences, one was remanded to jail for thirty days, and fifteen received chain gang and penitentiary sentences ranging from six months to eight years. In 1926 eight persons received four years and a ninth a life sentence.⁵¹ In 1930 forty-nine persons were indicted. In only one case, that of a lynching at Thomasville, Georgia, were the lynchers dealt with as murderers and life sentences imposed on two men. Only two of the Sherman, Texas, lynchers were convicted; one of arson, the other of rioting. Each was sentenced to two years. The other forty-five indictments resulted in acquittals. Not one of the lynchers indicted at Marion, Walhalla or Chickasha was convicted although the testimony involving some was conclusive. Indeed, one of the Walhalla defendants later publicly confessed that he was the leader of the mob which lynched Allen Green (April 23, 1930). A special grand jury refused to indict the lynchers at Abbeville, Alabama (1937). Impeachment proceedings were filed against Sheriff J. L. Corbitt, charging neglect of duty, but he was acquitted.⁵²

In February, 1940, a mob battered their way into a jail at Snow Hill, Maryland, in order to remove two colored women. They were

⁵⁰ *Crisis*, Sept., 1940, 291.

⁵¹ Raper, *op. cit.*, 32.

⁵² *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1937, 28:5; Mar. 10, 1937, 13:2; June 6, 1937, 9: 2.

accused of no crime, but were suspected of knowing someone who was suspected of having committed a crime. Although at least forty members of the mob were known to Sheriff J. William Hall, he decided to let the matter drop. "There has been no demand for action against the mob." William Kerbin, state's attorney, also washed his hands of the matter. "It is not my job to lead the investigation. We have not heard complaints from any parties."⁵³ W. S. Cochran of Conroe, Texas, shot and killed Bob White (June 10, 1941) in a crowded courtroom, thus "reversing" the United States Supreme Court which had ordered a new trial. After a "trial" in which the county prosecutor joined the defense attorney in asking an acquittal, the jury "deliberated" for two minutes and decided that Cochran was "not guilty."⁵⁴

The failure of states to take proper measures to deal with lynchers has led to agitation for a national statute. Such a bill was introduced into Congress in 1920. The Southern press opposed it as an invasion of state rights, and it never came to a vote. The Dyer anti-lynching bill, providing fines and imprisonment for persons convicted in federal courts and fines and penalties against states, counties and towns failing to use reasonable efforts to protect citizens from mob violence, passed the House in 1922, but was killed in the Senate by a filibuster. At least nine other measures have been brought into one or both houses of Congress since 1922. The Costigan-Wagner Bill provided that (1) state police officers are liable to imprisonment for not trying to prevent lynchings; (2) centers in which lynchings occur are liable to a fine from \$2,000 to \$10,000. It was killed in the Senate after a six-day filibuster (1935).⁵⁵ The Wagner-Van Nuys Bill, which was modeled on it, passed the House in the special session (1937) but never came to a vote in the Senate. In the regular session (1938) it encountered a Senate filibuster of forty-seven days before it was pushed aside. The Wagner-Gavagan Bill of 1940 passed the House, and the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to place it on the calendar. Due to the serious international situation, those controlling the progress of legislation did not wish the prolonged filibuster the bill would incur, and it never came to a vote.⁵⁶ All these bills have met with solid opposition from Southern members. The putting down of mob vio-

⁵³ *Crisis*, Mar., 1940, 81; Apr., 1940, 115.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, July, 1941, 215; Jan., 1942, 7.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, May 2, 1935, 1:5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1940, 15:3.

lence, they say, is a matter for the state and local authorities. This means, unfortunately, that nothing will be done about it.

It is difficult to see how lynching can be justified from any point of view. Certainly the practice is unnecessary to eradicate rape when less than one-fourth of those lynched are accused of that crime. The Southern Commission points out that these defenders of womanhood

in reality doubly betray the Southern woman, first, . . . by exaggerating her helplessness, and, second, by undermining the authority of police and courts which are her legitimate protectors.⁵⁷

If womanhood is so sacred a thing, it is hard to understand why it is only regarded when accompanied by a white skin. Indeed, the number of lynch victims might be still further reduced if he who is without sin among lynchers were required to fire the first shot. There is no evidence that lynching acts as a deterrent from crime. Dr. Edward Byron Reuter writes,

Lynchings probably operate to increase rather than to decrease crime. The mob spectacles give wide publicity to crimes committed, so act suggestively to incite others to similar types of behaviour. They increase the bitterness and hatred of the race whose members are the victims of mob action and lead to the concealment of offenders and to reprisals when opportunity offers.⁵⁸

Dr. Weatherford, an authority on race relations and a Southern man, says,

I am absolutely convinced that lynching does not frighten the criminal class, and hence does not prevent the awful crime against our women. On the other hand, it has increased this crime, and has put the criminal in the class of martyrs.⁵⁹

In this spirit, Countee Cullen, in his poem *The Black Christ*, has compared a Negro dangling from a limb to the body of Jesus hanging from the cross.

Mob law is a violation of the fundamental principles on which our government is founded. A mob should be the last to act both as judge and jury, for it can never be certain "beyond a reasonable doubt" that it has a guilty man. The hysterical victim of assault is in no condition to identify the suspect, nor can any confidence be placed in alleged confessions wrung from suspects by

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1931, 27:1.

⁵⁸ *The American Race Problem*, 377.

⁵⁹ *Negro Life in the South*, 168.

torture. Constitutionally, the meanest criminal is entitled to jury trial, the right to employ counsel, to cross examine witnesses and defend himself against false accusations. He cannot enjoy these rights at the hands of a mob. The woman whose tale of attack caused the riot at Springfield, Illinois, afterward admitted that she had knowingly accused the wrong man.⁶⁰ The three Lomans were lynched at Aiken, South Carolina, after one of them had been acquitted by a jury. "There is real doubt of guilt of at least half the victims of mob violence," declared the Southern Commission. The Commission found that two of the twenty-one victims in 1930 were "guiltless"—they were not even accused—and eleven others "possibly so."⁶¹ In six of the eleven cases there is doubt as to what crimes the victim committed; in the other five there is doubt that the mob got the guilty men. More than three-fifths of those lynched in 1931 are now known to be innocent. The proportion of doubt is no less in the more recent killings.

The influence of lynching does not cease to be effective outside the districts where such demonstrations occur. The details, glaringly set forth in Negro newspapers, are not only read in the homes; they are discussed by Negro groups in barber shops and pool rooms in communities where there have been no riots, and a general impression that life and property are insecure is created. The Negro loses faith in his white neighbors and his government. The average Negro has never been ill-used by a mob; but he may be troubled by an uncertainty of never knowing when the caprice of mob spirit may be turned in his direction. The lynching of Anthony Crawford⁶² at Abbeville, South Carolina, is proof that good conduct and innocence of wrong doing is no guarantee of immunity.

The effect on the community is equally bad. It is white civilization that is on trial, for it is the law as created by white lawmakers that is treated with contempt by lynchers. It is a remarkable fact that most victims of mob violence are taken from the custody of officers. In all probability they would be tried for their crime if there were any evidence of guilt. They are not malefactors of great wealth or high social standing who might escape justice

⁶⁰ Chicago Commission, *op. cit.*, 67-71.

⁶¹ New York *Times*, Nov. 10, 1931, 27:1; *Lit. Digest*, Nov. 21, 1931, 111:10; G. F. Milton, "The Impeachment of Judge Lynch," *Va. Quar. R.*, 8: 247-56, Apr., 1932.

⁶² Crawford was a substantial Negro farmer of Abbeville County, S. C. His lynching was the culmination of a dispute with a white merchant over the price of cotton seed.

through influence or the use of skillful counsel; they are poor and friendless wretches whose chances in the regular courts are none too favorable. Southern sheriffs, judges, prosecutors, juries and the whole machinery of justice are white. If guilty, conviction and punishment by ordinary judicial process is almost certain. At Waco, Texas (1916), the mob waited outside the courtroom until the verdict was brought in and the death penalty pronounced. Then, when there was not the remotest chance of a reprieve, with the connivance of a corrupt sheriff, the prisoner was seized and put to death in the public square by torture. That process has been repeated more than once.

Lastly, lynching destroys the moral influence of the United States among other nations. Americans have been loud in denunciation of Russian pogroms among the Jews, Turkish atrocities in Armenia, and anti-Semitism in Germany. We denounced Belgium's exploitation of the Congo and went to war to avenge the victims of the German war-lords. Yet America's lynching record shows atrocities as horrible as any registered in modern warfare. When we have cleansed the inside of our own cup, we may be more effective in extending our moral influence elsewhere.

CHAPTER XII

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

The task of educating the freedmen began before the drums of war were silent. White missionaries, chiefly from New England, accompanied the invading armies and began the work of intellectual emancipation. The first day school for Negroes was opened by the American Missionary Society at Fortress Monroe in Virginia in 1861. As the Union armies pressed into the Confederacy, army and mission schools were established in the Carolinas, Louisiana, Mississippi and elsewhere. In 1865 Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau, one of whose functions was to assume charge of Negro education. General O. O. Howard, chief of the Bureau, cooperated with various agencies, mostly religious and benevolent societies, for the development of a Negro school system in the Southern states. The Peabody Fund, founded in 1867 and directed by Dr. Barnas Sears, gave much valuable aid.

The philanthropists who sponsored these schools assumed that what the Negro needed was the same sort of education which fitted the white man for his place in society. Consequently, most of the schools were patterned on those of New England with emphasis on classical and literary training. In practice, they were forced to do much preparatory work, and for a long time the curricula consisted of the alphabet, elementary arithmetic, geography, and in some cases grammar and high school subjects. There was practically no industrial work. At that time, few persons thought of education as including the training of hands, and those who did express such views with regard to the Negro were suspected of some secret plan to reduce the freedmen to slavery. The work was carried on in the basements of Negro churches, in temporary barracks and abandoned buildings. Although they had only a vague conception of the benefits to be derived, the records show that Negroes were anxious to be educated. Believing that illiteracy was the cause of their inferiority, they looked on education as a sort of talisman which could protect its possessor from the curse of Adam and insure a life of dignified ease. Children and old men sat side by side. Those who could not go to school in the daytime went at night. The 90,000 pupils enrolled at the opening

of 1866 grew to nearly 150,000 in 1870. During the early part of the period practically all the teachers were Northern whites, although in 1870 the Bureau reported 1,324 Negro (mostly Northern) teachers out of a total of 3,300.

When the Freedmen's Bureau went out of existence, its educational work was taken over by the states, although many of the schools continued under private control, financed by Northern religious organizations. The reconstruction governments appropriated considerable sums to education, but there was not much to show for it. Much of the school money was stolen; more was wasted. Neither school buildings nor equipment were in evidence. The Southern whites had little money with which to support a school system, to say nothing of two, and separation of races was insisted upon in all schools supported by the state. Naturally this meant poorer schools, shorter terms and lower salaries for teachers. More difficult still was the problem of procuring suitable teachers for the Negro schools. The Northerners were *persona non grata* under the new regime, and few Southern whites dared risk loss in caste by educational work among Negroes. It was necessary to have Negro teachers, and expediency demanded that they be trained in the South. Some of these came from the church-supported high schools, normal schools and colleges. The Peabody Fund, and later the Slater Fund, gave financial aid in the establishment of such schools. But the states could not leave the burden to be borne entirely by church and private philanthropy. In each of them state-supported normal schools and colleges were established for the training of Negro teachers. In spite of conditions which made racial cooperation difficult, the Southern states spent nearly \$100,000,000 for Negro education between 1870 and 1900.

But Negro education soon split on the fear that it would lead to demands for racial equality. The agitation over the Civil Rights Bill during the mid-seventies did harm to educational progress in every Southern state. The bill proposed to force equality of blacks and whites in public places. The act which finally passed Congress (1876) made no mention of co-racial schools. Nevertheless, the bogey of social equality prejudiced the whites against the public school system. If Congress could order the races to be seated together in theaters, churches and public conveyances, was it not logical to suppose that its authority would extend to the school-house as well? And rather than endure a mixed school system, many Southerners preferred no schools at all. Others felt

that education would spoil the Negro for labor. When Booker T. Washington established Tuskegee, he encountered the opposition of those who pictured an educated Negro "with a high hat, imitation gold eye-glasses, a showy walking-stick, kid gloves, fancy boots, and whatnot—in a word, a man who was determined to live by his wits."¹ Even in the North, a great many doubted the wisdom of the classical education which young Ethiopia was receiving. After the adoption of the new state constitutions,² there was a conscious effort in some quarters to restrict educational opportunities for the black since literacy would enable him to qualify as a voter.

Despite its poverty, the South must operate two school systems. The difficulty is increased by the pressure of standardizing and accrediting agencies, which insist upon higher standards, and this inevitably means larger expenditures. Under these circumstances, school authorities usually consider it their first duty to provide good schools for white children. The white schools are given such funds as are considered needful. The colored schools get what is left. Often it is little enough. Thousands of Negro children cannot go to school because the school commissioners have provided no school for them. As late as 1920, the State Superintendent of North Carolina reported 126 Negro districts without any school-house.³ In some of the Southern states, a movement to consolidate the rural white schools is in progress. The children are transported at state expense to some centralized school in town with the result that they have better buildings, and better teachers who are the recipients of better salaries. Thus all are benefited. But only a few of the Southern states have extended this practice to Negro children. Dr. Charles S. Johnson cites a typical illustration in Montgomery County, Alabama. Here the white children have a consolidated school system. But a Negro school population of more than 15,000 "is served by 73 isolated one-room schools, supervised by an overworked Jeanes supervisor."⁴ Of the 44,187 colored children covered by a recent Federal investigation, 39 per cent lived two miles or more from the school they must attend.

¹ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 119.

² *Supra.*, 96-7.

³ Weatherford and Johnson, *op. cit.*, 359, quoting *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina for the Scholastic Years 1918-19 and 1919-20*, 230.

⁴ Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 248.

Despite this inaccessibility of the schools, little transportation at public expense is provided.⁵

While the school funds of the state are distributed among the various counties on the basis of school population, the local school boards have power to apportion the funds between the two races. Usually the per capita expenditure on white schools is five or six times that on colored schools. Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, in his comprehensive survey on *Negro Education*, published in 1916, says:

In fifteen states and the District of Columbia for which salaries by race could be obtained, the public school teachers received \$42,510,431 in salaries. Of this sum \$36,649,827 was for teachers of 3,552,451 white children and \$5,860,876 for teachers of 1,852,181 colored children. On a per capita basis, this is \$10.32 for each white child and \$2.89 for each colored child.⁶

Since this survey the amounts have been increased but the inequality remains. The annual cost of education per colored pupil in ten Southern states was higher in 1935-36 than in 1931-32; for the respective years it was \$17.04 and \$15.41. For white children in the same states and years it was \$49.30 and \$46.85.⁷ Although the expenses for white and colored education vary from year to year, the following table, given by the *Negro Year Book* (1931-32), is typical :

	White	Colored
Alabama	\$37.50	\$7.16
Arkansas	26.91	17.06
Florida	78.25	10.57
Georgia	31.52	6.98
Louisiana	40.64	7.84
Mississippi	31.33	5.94
North Carolina	44.48	14.30
South Carolina	52.89	5.20
Tennessee	46.52	31.54
Texas	46.71	39.66
Virginia	47.46	13.30 ⁸

In 1928, according to Fred S. McCuiston, agent for the Rosenwald Fund, Coahoma County, Mississippi, spent \$54 per

⁵ Ambrose Caliver, "Elementary Education of Negroes," *School Life*, May, 1940. South Carolina, where half the school children are colored, is a case in point. Recently the state spent \$642,086 on school buses for white children, and \$628 on buses for colored children!

⁶ Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 39, 1916.

⁷ Office of Education, *Statistics of the Education of Negroes, 1933-34 and 1935-36*, 1938, No. 13.

⁸ Page 204.

capita on whites and \$2.39 on Negroes; while the Negro quotas in Clay and LeFlore counties were 45 cents and 81 cents respectively. In North Carolina the colored quota ranged from \$5.50 in Union County to \$32.82 in Mitchell County; in Arkansas from \$1.14 in Yell County to \$20.61 in Sebastian County; in Louisiana from \$1.36 in St. John Parish to \$28.20 in Orleans Parish. Autauga County, Alabama, expended \$23.16 per capita for the education of white children and \$2.25 per capita for colored children. Wilcox County received from the state \$4.27 per capita of which the colored child received 69 cents.⁹ If it costs \$23.16 a year to train a white child for citizenship in Autauga County, by what logic may one conclude that a colored citizen can be made for \$2.25? According to the report of the Texas Educational Survey (1925), that state appropriated \$12 for the education of each Negro child. Yet in

68 per cent of the cases in the common school districts the Negro child is actually receiving less than (that amount). . . . This means, in effect, that many districts are using money intended for the education of the Negro child to apply in the cost of the education of the white child. In such districts the maintenance taxes, if raised, are used entirely to supplement the state money received for the white children, and the Negro schools receive no part of the local tax fund, even when Negro property owners pay a part of this tax.¹⁰

From time to time efforts have been made to curtail the Negro's share still farther by dividing the school fund in proportion to the taxes paid by each race, the assumption being that the Negro with little taxable property is not entitled even to such crumbs as now fall from the white child's table. Happily, such attempts have always failed, either because the bill did not pass the legislature or was declared invalid by the courts. Nevertheless, strong opposition has developed to "liberal education" and there is a disposition to confine Negro education to the rudimentary branches and to a narrow type of industrialism.

With the school fund unequally divided, it follows of necessity that the Negro schools are inferior. The last edition of the *Negro Year Book* gives the value of school property in fifteen southern states as \$1,086,942,000, of which \$72,000,000 represents the value of school property used by Negro children.¹¹ This is

⁹ Chicago *Defender*, Nov. 15, 1930.

¹⁰ Geo. A. Works (ed.), *Texas Educational Survey Report*, i, 263.

¹¹ Page 164.

about \$157 for each white child of school age and \$37 for each Negro child.¹²

Many of the rural school buildings are little better than sheds. In 1921 the Kentucky State Education Commission referred to the one-room rural schools in that state as "box-like structures" "in all respects essentially alike" and "almost all bad."

Half of these buildings were unpainted, the roofs leak, the weatherboarding is off here and there, desks are broken, knobs gone, window panes out, walls stained, floors uneven and cracked, seats broken and out of place.¹³

The Texas Education Survey reported that only 19 per cent of its Negro schools were "modern."¹⁴ A Federal survey (1933) discovered a large number of schools without seats or desks, blackboards, or any kind of playground equipment. Out of 532 rural schools, 515 used outside toilets and 11 had no toilets at all. Many had no facilities for washing the hands.¹⁵

Adequate provision for health, comfort, heating, lighting and ventilation are found only in the newest buildings. And even these are often equipped with heating plants, desks, manual training and cooking-room equipment which white schools have discarded. Woofter found some new colored school buildings in which, despite the fact that they had been in use for two or three years,

knobs had not been put on the doors, and many doors that should have had glass in them had none; teachers' desks were lacking; electrical fixtures were installed but not connected; walls were un-plastered; plumbing was incomplete, and other items were left unfinished.¹⁶

Drinking fountains and cloak-rooms were found only in the newest buildings and most schools were poorly equipped with books and maps.

The condition of buildings has improved much during twenty years. The Rosenwald school building program, which was responsible for the erection of more than 5,000 school buildings for Ne-

¹² Ambrose Caliver, *Certain Facts about the Education of Negroes*, op. cit.

¹³ Report Kentucky Education Commission, 1921, 72-3, quoted by Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America*, 375. Cf. Biennial Report North Carolina, 1919-20, 230; *Report of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for Georgia*, 264.

¹⁴ Works, op. cit., 271-2.

¹⁵ Caliver, *Rural Elementary Education among Negroes*, op. cit., 46-8.

¹⁶ Thos. J. Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 222.

groes, was an important stimulus to improvement. About the time this program was discontinued, Federal emergency funds gave added impetus, although the bulk of these funds were assigned to white schools.¹⁷ About 18,000 of the 25,000 elementary schools in the South are still 1- and 2-teacher schools, and thousands of Negro schools are still being conducted in dilapidated churches, lodge halls, abandoned cabins, and other makeshifts.¹⁸

Overcrowding is a chronic condition in most Southern Negro schools.

A careful survey of three typical counties in Alabama . . . disclosed the fact that whereas the seating capacity of the 80 colored schools was but 3,794, their enrollment was 6,391, and the attendance was 5,832. In other words, these schools were called upon to accommodate at the time of the survey, 2,038 more pupils than their normal capacity.¹⁹

In the common schools and smaller independent districts (of Texas) the total enrollment was 109,408 with only 57,715 seats provided. Thus 51,693 Negro pupils in the common schools of Texas are not provided with seats, and there are no seats for 14,441 of the 90,318 pupils enrolled in the larger school districts. It is apparent, then, that one-third of the Negro children enrolled in the public schools of Texas are not provided with seats.²⁰

Ninety per cent of the new elementary schools and all of the new high schools visited in the course of this survey were built too small in the first place. With one or two exceptions, the buildings were over-run with pupils the first year.²¹

The situation in the urban areas is better, but also inadequate. Many classes are held in portables, and in other places the problem of excess enrollment is met by double and triple sessions and the crowding of pupils into classrooms beyond their normal capacity. Cases have been found where three pupils were sitting together, where the aisles had been eliminated and yet other pupils sat on window sills and the floor. Seat-crowding is paralleled by class-room crowding. Surveys show two or more classes reciting in the same room at the same time. Often there are fifty or sixty pupils to each teacher. The amount of individual attention received by the average

¹⁷ Mississippi is a typical illustration. PWA and WPA expended \$8,000,000 for building white school houses in that state, and only \$400,000 for Negro schoolhouses. *Biennial Report and Recommendations of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the Legislature of Mississippi for the Scholastic Years 1935-6 and 1936-7.*

¹⁸ Caliver, *School Life*, May, 1940; Caliver, *Supervision of the Education of Negroes as a function of the State Departments of Education*, 12.

¹⁹ Jones, *op. cit.*, i, 33.

²⁰ Workd, *op. cit.*, i, 265.

²¹ Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 220.

child under such conditions is necessarily small. Promotions are mechanical. The children must be passed on to make room for the next group.

Lack of funds is partly responsible for the short term which the school runs. The length of the term varies from state to state and county to county as well as from year to year. The average in seventeen Southern states is 146 days, while the average term for white children in the same states is 167 days.²² But even this represents less than the amount of education received by most Negro children because of poor attendance. The poverty of the rural Negro makes it necessary that a child who can be of financial assistance contribute his share to the family's support. There would be starvation in many a black home if the child labor laws were enforced. The result is that when there is work to be done in the cotton fields school attendance suffers. The tendency of the Negro tenant farmer to shift his place of abode further complicates the problem. Not only does the child enter school late and leave before the short term is completed, but he is likely to change schools in the middle of the term. To this add the days lost because of sickness and bad weather—remember that 39 per cent of the children studied in the Federal survey lived two miles from the school house. Approximately half a million children, constituting more than one-fifth of the Negro enrollment, are out of school each day.²³ In 1935-36 the average attendance ranged from 86 days in Mississippi to 155 in West Virginia, a difference of three and a half months. In only three Southern states did colored children attend school as much as an average of 145 days.²⁴ Under these circumstances, proficiency on the part of the pupil is virtually hopeless. Yet another reason why attendance is so irregular is because the teaching is so poor; the colored child gains nothing by going.

While considerable improvement has taken place since Dr. Jones wrote, the Negro elementary school teacher is still poorly prepared. As recently as 1930, Fred McCuiston declared that there were more than 18,000 Negro teachers in the Southern states who possessed less than a high school education. Mississippi alone had 1,312 Negro elementary teachers with only an elementary school background.²⁵ Appointment often depends on other things than fitness to teach. If the school commissioners read the examination papers

²² Caliver, *School Life*, May, 1940.

²³ *Ibid.*; Office of Education, 1938, No. 13, *op. cit.*

²⁴ *Negro Handbook*, 1942, 111.

²⁵ *The South's Negro Teaching Force*, 19. Cf. Horace Mann Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*, 267.

carefully, it is probable that three-fourths of the Negro schools would be closed immediately for lack of teachers. Blind teachers leading blind students; there can be no greater human tragedy.

The number of Negroes qualified to attend normal schools is so small that, until recently, few states have seen fit to establish them, and such training schools as do exist fail to measure up to the standards of professional schools. Such neglect is fatal to the educational system, for upon such schools the supply of trained teachers in the elementary school depends. In the cities conditions are somewhat better for here the city high schools and normal schools may be drawn upon.

All teachers in Southern schools are poorly paid, but the salaries of colored teachers are especially meager. There was some slight improvement in 1936 over 1931, the average annual salaries for Negro elementary teachers in the states reporting in the two years being \$439 and \$433 respectively.²⁶ According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the following salary scales were in effect in 1935-36:

	White	Negro	Amount per Negro for each \$1 per white
Alabama	\$ 709	\$ 328	\$.46
Arkansas	550	316	.57
District of Columbia	1,376	2,376	1.00
Florida	1,030	493	.48
Georgia	709	282	.40
Kentucky	802	607	.76
Louisiana	931	403	.43
Maryland	1,515	1,187	.78
Mississippi	783	247	.32
North Carolina	811	543	.67
Oklahoma	926	821	.89
South Carolina	825	320	.37
Tennessee	752	520	.69
Texas	991	604	.61
Virginia	901	520	.58 ²⁷

The discrimination extends to the city schools also. In Lexington, colored elementary teachers received a maximum of \$900, while the minimum for white teachers was \$1,000. Colored high school teachers received a \$1,200 maximum, while the white minimum was \$1,400. White teachers received an annual increase of \$50, Negro teachers of \$25. At Memphis, salaries of white

²⁶ Caliver, *School Life*, May, 1940.

²⁷ N.A.A.C.P., *Teachers' Salaries in Black and White*, 4.

elementary teachers ranged between \$1,000 and \$1,600; colored elementary teachers between \$720 and \$1,020. The salaries of white high school teachers ran from \$1,400 to \$1,920 as contrasted with \$1,020 to \$1,680 for colored. New Orleans paid white elementary teachers from \$1,200 to \$1,750 with \$150 additional for an A.B. degree and another \$150 for an A.M. degree, or a maximum of \$2,050. Colored elementary teachers received from \$1,000 to \$1,500 with no additional remuneration for holders of degrees. The salaries of high school teachers for white and colored races respectively were \$1,400 to \$3,300 and \$1,100 to \$2,300.²⁸ Throughout the South the average salary of Negro high school teachers is \$963 as compared with \$1,479 for whites. Negro high school principals average \$1,325 per annum as compared with \$2,454 for white principals.²⁹ The lower wage of the Negro teacher is due, partly at least, to the fact that she is poorly trained and less efficient than the white. But the lower wage also precludes the possibility of securing better teachers. Many students who are qualified for teaching hesitate to make the pecuniary sacrifice involved. Thus the efficient among them are drained off into the channels of trade. The less capable remain to train the youth of the race.

Seven years ago the N.A.A.C.P. started a fight to determine the legality of the double salary standard. The result was a victory when Judge John J. Parker of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals ruled (June 18, 1940) such a double standard to be an unconstitutional discrimination. Virginia and Maryland have now equalized the salaries of white and colored teachers.³⁰ Further litigation seems necessary to secure such action in other Southern states.

Until recently the Negro school has been almost wholly without supervision. The county superintendent has obligations to the white schools. Many superintendents visit their Negro schools once or twice a year; others do not visit them at all. The state departments of education have special supervisors of Negro education, commonly known as state agents. In one state, there are more than 1,000 public schools and over 3,000 teachers to be supervised by one staff member. In another state there are slightly more than twice as many schools and teachers to be supervised by four staff members. To pay even one short visit to all the schools in the state is mani-

²⁸ Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 205-6.

²⁹ "The High School Education of Negroes," *School and Society*, June 3, 1933. 37: 703-4.

³⁰ New York Times, Nov. 23, 1939, 34:3; *Crisis*, Dec., 1940, 390.

festly impossible. To remain long enough to offer any real assistance in the improvement of instruction is out of the question. Short terms, poorly prepared teachers and inadequate supervision means that the South is really wasting much of the money spent on Negro education. Dr. Jones reports the supervisor of white elementary rural schools in South Carolina as saying:

Among the Negro rural schools which I have visited, I have found only one in which the brightest class knew the multiplication table.³¹

True, this was twenty-five years ago. Let us listen to a more recent witness.

Yesterday I was in a school house converted from an abandoned plantation cabin. The teacher was a girl of seventeen, hardly more literate than her advanced pupils. . . . That teacher received \$30 a month for a four months' term, and from her poor teaching I doubt if half of her pupils returned to the cotton fields one whit wiser than when they entered. In the county where this school is located 55 per cent of the Negro adult population is illiterate. The short school, irregular attendance and poor teaching are undoubtedly graduating yearly hundreds from the ranks of these school children to those of adult illiterates.³²

The public schools are supplemented by ninety-two³³ private "academies" and "colleges" (which are really elementary and secondary schools), nominally under the auspices of some northern religious organization. The amount of financial aid contributed by the church is small, and the schools struggle on after a fashion in the face of heavy odds. Their work is handicapped by the fact that there are often several schools in a town which, perhaps, could support one. Yet out of these academies have come leaders and teachers. Some, like the Calhoun school in Alabama and the Penn school on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, do social settlement work in the most backward parts of the South. But such schools are likely to encounter the hostility of the whites who resent outside interference. With some exceptions, it is in sections where private schools exist that the funds for Negro public schools are most meager.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, ii, 14-15.

³² H. M. Bone, "A Negro looks at his South," *Harper's Mag.*, June, 1931, 163: 98-108.

³³ These ninety-two institutions have an enrollment of 5,760. (*Negro Handbook*, 1942, 109). In 1915-16 there were 216 private institutions with an enrollment of 11,527. The falling off of private institutions and increased attendance at public schools is an evidence of improvement.

It is only with the beginning of the new century that some Southern leaders have realized that it is more costly to allow the Negro to remain in ignorance than to educate him. In the words of Jackson Davis,

If we deny the Negro the training which he needs to make a better man and a better farmer, we suppress our rural life and bring down our average to a lower level, and we continue to have him wear out the soil, which is our greatest natural wealth.³⁴

The major forces behind Negro educational progress are such men as J. Y. Joyner, N. C. Newbold, and Governor Aycock of North Carolina, Dr. James H. Dillard, Leo M. Favrot, W. T. B. Williams, Arthur Holt Stone, Dr. Booker T. Washington, Dr. Robert Russa Moton, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Dr. H. B. Frissell, Dr. James E. Gregg, and such philanthropic agencies as the General Education Board, the Jeanes Fund, the Slater Fund, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Rosenwald Fund, and the Southern Education Foundation. The Interracial Commission has been influential in every state in securing new buildings, larger appropriations, new trade schools and closer cooperation between school officials and Negro teachers.

The Southern states have greatly increased their expenditures for Negro education since 1910. But the proportion allotted to Negro schools has been very slightly increased, if it has been increased at all. Writing in 1928, Mr. N. C. Newbold, North Carolina state superintendent of Negro education, declared that since the World War, eight Southern states had erected school buildings for Negroes costing \$30,000,000.^{34a} The expenditure of such a sum in so short a time is a sign of hopefulness, although the same states spent over \$270,000,000 on buildings for white children in the same period. But too often the Negro school is poorly constructed and lacking in equipment—including proper sanitary arrangements and playground space.

The shortage in properly equipped colored teachers has been partially met by the establishment of county training schools, designed to furnish elementary teachers for the rural schools. These are mainly supported from the public school fund but also receive aid from the state and the General Education Board. In 1933 there were 355 of these county training schools in the

³⁴ Jones, *op. cit.*, 1, 27.

^{34a} "Common Schools for Negroes in the South," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1928, 140: 213.

South.³⁵ A considerable number of them have become accredited four-year high schools. The *Negro Year Book* (1925-6) enumerates seventeen state normal schools, and there are city normal schools for Negroes at Louisville, Baltimore and Washington, as well as teacher training courses in several Negro high schools. Some states require Negro teachers to attend school to renew their certificates. Salaries of teachers have more than doubled in some states, and the length of the school term has increased.

This forward movement came to an abrupt standstill when it collided with the depression of '29. Although the restriction of child labor in the N.R.A. codes was not always enforced, it did result in an increase in the enrollment in Negro elementary schools. Unfortunately this increased enrollment was paralleled by the necessity of drastic retrenchment in public school expenditures. In 485 Southern counties (1933) 58 per cent of the schools failed to open or closed earlier than usual.³⁶ Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Missouri reduced average monthly salaries of colored teachers by 40, 31, 28, and 21 per cent respectively, and cut the school term as well. One county in Arkansas reduced the number of its Negro teachers from thirty to seventeen, and their average monthly salary from \$62.14 to \$37.67. Another county in Mississippi reduced its term from 120 to 80 days and its average monthly salary from \$50 to \$25.³⁷ Building construction stopped. Teachers were paid in scrip. In 1934 only federal aid permitted the completion of a normal school year.

The problem of Negro education centers in the rural school. Most Southern Negroes live in the country and it is upon the rural schools that the great mass must depend for the training they receive. In the past these schools attempted nothing but a little "book learning," and that without supervision. The teachers attempt learning by rote, with little application to the practical problems of life. The books they use are written for use in city schools and do not concern themselves with rural life and problems. Thus the educational system fails to adapt itself to community needs. The reduction in illiteracy is an important forward step. But the mere ability to read and write is of little

³⁵ Caliver, *Education of Negro Teachers*, Office of Education, Bull. No. 10, 4.

³⁶ Caliver, "Outlook for Negro Education," *School Life*, Oct., 1934, 21: 40-1.

³⁷ Caliver, "Negro Education in the Depression," *School Life*, Feb., 1933, 18: 111-12.

value to a backward race, most of whom will spend their lives on thirty- or forty-acre farms.

Dr. Dillard, by his wise administration of the Jeanes and Slater Funds, has rendered an invaluable service in supplying these deficiencies. The Jeanes Fund was founded in 1908 by Miss Anna T. Jeans of Philadelphia. The original endowment was \$1,000,000, the income being used to employ traveling colored teachers who give instruction in home industries and sanitation. Most of these teachers are trained in sewing. Others teach cooking, nursing, agriculture, carpentry and the like. Each teacher visits a number of schools. She teaches a lesson, arranges with the regular teacher to teach other lessons in her absence and returns in a week or ten days for further instruction. During the past twenty-five years the number of Jeanes teachers has increased from 163 to 464, and the proportion of their salaries paid from public funds has risen from 15 to 87 per cent.³⁸

Almost everything that has been done to provide high school education for Negroes post-dates the World War. Because of economic pressure or lack of desire, few colored pupils demanded this type of instruction. Dr. Jones's report listed only 64 public high schools for Negroes in the Southern states. Of these 46 maintained 4-year courses and 18 3-year courses. About two hundred other schools offered some instruction above the elementary grades. There was only one colored high school in South Carolina and only two in Florida. North Carolina and Louisiana had no Negro high schools at all.^{38a} Athens was the only city in Georgia with a 4-year Negro high school. Atlanta and Macon had no place for Negro secondary education in their system. A considerable change has taken place. There are now approximately 2,000 schools in the Southern states which offer Negroes educational opportunities beyond the eight grades. Only about half of them offer four years of work. About 40 per cent of them are accredited by state departments of education.³⁹ The 24,000 Negro children whom Dr. Jones found in high schools in 1915⁴⁰ have increased to 207,884.⁴¹ Yet there are 230 Southern counties with no Negro high school—despite

³⁸ Caliver, *Supervision of the Education of Negroes as a Function of State Departments of Education*, 11; "Elementary Education for Negroes," *School Life*, May, 1940.

^{38a} Jones, *Negro Education*, i, 42.

³⁹ Caliver, "Secondary School for Negroes," *School Life*, July, 1940.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Negro Education*, i, 42.

⁴¹ Caliver, "Secondary Schools for Negroes," *op. cit.*

the fact that approximately 160,000 Negroes of high school age reside there.⁴² Dr. Caliver says that there are 650,000 Negro boys and girls, 14 to 17 years of age, who are not in school.⁴³

The deficiencies of the elementary schools are repeated in the high schools. In two of the sixteen states covered by the Federal survey, the cost of secondary education was twice as great for whites as for Negroes; in seven states the cost was from six to thirteen times greater for whites than for Negroes. Each white teacher in these states had an average of 60 pupils; each colored teacher averaged 211 pupils.⁴⁴ Richmond's colored high school, built in 1922, contained 962 seats. It had an enrollment of 1,032 in its second year, and of 1,196 in 1925-6. In 1923 Atlanta constructed a high school building to house one thousand pupils. On the opening day 1,565 enrolled. In 1926 the enrollment was 2,215. Lexington's Negro high school, erected in 1922, was overcrowded the first year.⁴⁵ Overcrowding and small teaching force is accompanied by low academic standards. Students of low grade ability are passed from poor elementary schools to poor high schools where graduation becomes a matter of ability to stay for four years. The graduates of these high schools go on to the normal schools or directly into the teaching profession. Thus the vicious circle repeats itself. Even graduates with standard degrees from Negro colleges do not have the equivalent preparation indicated by the same degree from a white college.

Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Kansas City, and a few other Northern cities have separate colored schools. So have parts of Indiana, Illinois, Kansas and New Jersey. Elsewhere in the North there is no legal separation, although the fact that Negroes tend to live in groups in every large city does bring about a separation in fact. A white face would be about as rare in a Harlem school as in a colored school in New Orleans. It is not unusual for colored children to be transferred to a school predominantly Negro, although some other building may be closer to their homes. There are places in New Jersey where the building is divided, with white teachers and pupils on one side and Negro teachers and pupils on the other, and a heavy wire screen

⁴² Thompson, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Caliver, "Secondary Schools for Negroes," *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁵ Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities*, 208-10.

dividing the playground.⁴⁶ Even in mixed schools there are signs of segregation in the form of seating arrangements. At least one teacher seated colored and white pupils together as a means of punishing white pupils.⁴⁷

The business of the school is to adjust pupils to their environment. But racial separation leads to lack of understanding, and lack of understanding gives way to hate. Thus our public schools contribute their share to the misunderstanding of the race problem. In Northern states, when the races are in separate schools, the Negro teachers have to meet the same entrance requirements as white teachers and are placed on the same salary schedules. But they are often assigned second-hand equipment.

A very large proportion of colored pupils in Northern schools are over age for the grade, the amount of retardation often amounting to two and sometimes as much as five years.⁴⁸ This does not necessarily denote inferior mentality since retardation is closely connected with migration. Careful studies of retarded pupils indicate that a large percentage of them had recently come from the South.⁴⁹ They are retarded because of inadequate teaching, short terms, and because they had never been able to attend school regularly. Comparisons of Northern Negroes with white pupils do not show any great discrepancy between them,⁵⁰ and Southern Negroes who made low intelligence scores were tested with very different results after attending Northern schools for a time.⁵¹

All studies agree that the Negro child in the Northern city shows greater irregularity of attendance than the white child. The average attendance of all pupils in the public schools of Philadelphia for five years was 87.7 per cent, but the attendance of Negro pupils averaged only 78.8 per cent.⁵² Many of the children are underfed and poorly clothed, and live in homes that are

⁴⁶ E. George Payne, "Negroes in the Public Elementary Schools of the North," *Annals of Amer. Acad.*, Nov., 1928, 140: 224-33; Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 268, quoting Lester B. Granger, "Race Relations in the School System," *Opportunity*, Nov., 1925.

⁴⁷ Woofter, *op. cit.*, 183.

⁴⁸ Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago*, 256-61; Payne, *op. cit.*; Mary Louise Mark, *Negroes in Columbus, Ohio*, 42-4; Detroit Bur. of Governmental Research, *The Negro in Detroit*, sec. viii; Epstein, *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*, 72; Woofter, *op. cit.*, 184-6; Philip A. Boyer, *The Adjustment of a School to Individual and Community Needs*, 55-61.

⁴⁹ E. K. Jones, "Problems of the Colored Child," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1921, 98: 142-7; *Negro in Chicago*, 261.

⁵⁰ Payne, *op. cit.*; *Negro in Chicago*, 261, 615.

⁵¹ Woofter, *op. cit.*, 188.

⁵² Odum, "Negro Children in the Public Schools of Philadelphia," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Sept., 1913, 49: 191. Cf. Boyer, *op. cit.*, 51.

inadequately heated. As a result of these conditions, the Negro child is especially susceptible to the effects of bad weather, and to diseases which make it necessary for him to be absent from school. In Philadelphia, white children showed only .7 per cent of tardiness, while Negro children showed 3.1 per cent or four times that of white children.⁵³ Since 40 per cent of the Negro mothers work away from home, the children frequently oversleep or stay away from school entirely. Not infrequently they are required to run errands or assist at home before going to school. Any teacher knows that poor attendance and a high percentage of tardiness seriously affects the quality of a child's school work. Lack of study is an important factor. There are practically no facilities for reading at home, and the conditions amid which the family lives usually makes home study out of the question. In most cases Negro parents are unable to assist their children and not always disposed to do so. It must also be remembered that a large number of colored pupils are employed. Some are practically self-supporting. It is unreasonable to expect the same mental alertness in a pupil who is employed several hours a day that one would find in the child who has time for relaxation and pleasure. Certainly these factors go a long way to explain the difference between the school work of white and colored children.

When one considers the discouraging influences which beset the Negro in the shape of inadequate buildings and equipment, short terms, poorly prepared teachers, and home conditions which interfere with regular attendance, the progress which he has made can be considered little short of phenomenal. It is true that many children have learned little or nothing; but it is also true that thousands of children have learned to read and write and make elementary mathematical calculations. Instead of 31.3 per cent of Negro children of school age in school as in 1900, 60 per cent were in school in 1930. Instead of 81.4 per cent illiterates in 1870, the percentage of Negro illiterates in 1930 was only 16.3. Data on the educational level of Negro selectees in the present war, when compared with similar data from the last war, shows a great advance. Among Negro men 35 to 44 years of age (most of whom had finished their education twenty years ago) only 13 per cent had received one year or more of high school education, while among Negro men in the 21 to 24 age group, 26.2 per cent had attended high school.⁵⁴

⁵³ Odum, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Bur. of Census, *The Educational Level of Men of Military Age in the United States, Series P-9, No. 15.*

But the problem of Negro education is more than a problem in the reduction of illiteracy. For the Negro child to study the same subjects as the white child will not remedy the deficiencies of the Negro home. Booker T. Washington was right when he emphasized the gospel of work as the *sina qua non* for the salvation of his race. Any educational system which does not stress industry and thrift is useless. The girls should be taught to sew and the boys to use tools. Both should learn to plant seeds intelligently. The stimulation of race pride demands that colored pupils be taught more of the history and achievements of their race, and that the growing body of literature by colored writers be studied. The Negro child should know that one Negro accompanied Columbus on his first voyage to the New World; that another stood beside Robert Peary at the North Pole. From Crispus Attucks, who gave his life for American freedom at Lexington, to Dorie Miller, who distinguished himself at Pearl Harbor, the Negro has played an important part in the defense of democracy. Surely the achievements of Alexander Crummell, Ira Aldridge, George Washington Carver, Dr. Ernest Edward Just, Marian Anderson, and Mary McLeod Bethune are as worthy of remembrance as those of dozens of white politicians whose names clutter our school books. Increased effort on the part of school teachers to compensate for the deficiencies of the Negro home is vital in a successful educational program. Instruction in hygiene and sanitation is of paramount importance, for unless the Negro home is made clean and sanitary and efforts made to eliminate disease, all educational efforts will be futile.

Perhaps the most discouraging fact is the failure of the school to hold its Negro pupils. Since a Negro boy can earn as much money before he finishes the eighth grade as he can after he completes it, there seems to be no reason why he should go to school longer than the law requires. Dr. Caliver believes that 68 per cent of the children entering the first grade never advance beyond the fourth, and that only 8 per cent of them enter high school. The report of the Texas Educational Survey declares that 47 per cent of the colored children of that state do not go beyond the fourth grade, whereas only 16 per cent of the white children stop there.⁵⁵ In Virginia, by the time the Negro child has reached the seventh grade, only one-fifth are left in the rural schools and two-fifths in the city

⁵⁵ Works, *op. cit.*; Leo M. Favrot, *Negro Education*, 257.

schools.⁵⁶ The mortality in high school is still greater. The same tendency is noted in the North as most recent reports show. It may be that the higher rents in the city compel the colored child to become a wage-earner; or it may be that because of restricted opportunities for employment, the colored child finds difficulty in using his education. It may be, too, that the curriculum is unattractive, and that a greater emphasis on the manual arts would have a tendency to hold them. At any rate, there are comparatively few colored children who graduate from high schools, even in Northern cities. This is unfortunate for, since college training is impossible for many Negroes, the secondary schools must necessarily be the training ground for the local leaders of the race.

⁵⁶ *Virginia Public School Survey*, pt. ii, vol. viii, p. 26, quoted by William Henry Brown, *The Education and Economic Development of the Negro in Virginia*, 62; Caliver, *Rural Elementary Education among Negroes under Jeanes Supervising Teachers*, 14.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEGRO COLLEGE

The first college degree won by a Negro in this country was conferred upon John Brown Russwurm by Bowdoin College in 1826. Thirty-three other Negroes were graduated from Northern colleges before emancipation.¹ From 1875 to 1900 the number of Negro graduates totaled about twelve or thirteen hundred.² Since 1900 the number has increased more rapidly and the Negroes with college degrees must be now over 30,000. But this is far too few to furnish leadership for a race of 12,000,000.

Higher education for Negroes in separate schools dates from just before the Civil War when two embryo colleges were founded on the borders of slaveland. In 1854 a group of Presbyterians chartered Ashmun Institute in Pennsylvania which was renamed Lincoln University twelve years later. In 1856 the Methodists laid the foundations of Wilberforce University, not far from Xenia, Ohio. Not long afterward the plant was purchased by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in whose hands it still remains.

During and after the war Northern enthusiasts, eager to accept the challenge that the Negro was not equal to the white man, set about establishing not only common schools but schools where such as were able might master the intricacies of higher learning. Many of the finest men and women of their time consecrated their lives to teaching the blacks. Much that they attempted was impracticable, but the mistakes were errors of judgment only. By 1869 thirteen "universities" had sprung up, including Howard at Washington, Fisk at Nashville, Straight in New Orleans, and Atlanta in Georgia. Most of them were maintained by Northern Protestant churches with assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau, and when the Bureau went out of existence they were retained under sectarian control. There were also a great many elementary or secondary schools, some of which later expanded into colleges. According to the United States Office of Education's *Educational Directory* and the *Handbook of Christian*

¹ Edward T. Ware, "Education of Negroes in the United States," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Sept., 1913, 49; 209-18.

² Albert Bushnell Hart, *The Southern South*, 318.

Higher Education,³ there are 118 institutions for Negroes offering one or more years of college work. Eighty-five of these are four-year colleges, and thirty-three offer less than four years of college work.

From the standpoint of support and supervision, these colleges are of three types. First, there is the school which receives all or most of its financial aid from public authorities. There are thirty-four colleges in this group. Seventeen of them are known as "land-grant" colleges because they are maintained from the Federal land-grant funds, or such portion of them as the state chooses to assign for that purpose. In 1935 these colleges had a property valuation of \$12,500,000 and an annual income of more than \$4,000,000.⁴ The administration is usually in the hands of a colored president and a white board of trustees. In most cases, these boards are appointed by the governor. Strangely enough, there is not a single alumnus on the governing board of any of these colleges. Several cities, notably Houston and Little Rock, maintain junior colleges, and in February, 1931, the Louisville Municipal College for Negroes, the first of its type in the United States, opened its doors.⁵ Morgan College in Maryland and Fort Valley Normal and Industrial Institute have changed from private to public control.

A second group of colleges consists of private institutions which have self-perpetuating boards of trustees and are responsible to no outside control. There are nine important colleges in this group, among them Atlanta, Howard, Hampton, Tuskegee, Morgan and Fisk. The capital investment of this group is nearly \$18,000,000.⁶ Alabama contributes about \$5,000 a year to Tuskegee, and the Federal government gives about \$700,000 to Howard. For the most part they are maintained through endowments supplemented by tuition fees.

In the third group are about sixty-five church colleges, supported largely by various religious denominations, whose governing boards are, in the last analysis, responsible to the religious group. Eight of these are controlled by the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church with headquarters at Chicago. The American Baptist Home Mission Society maintains six. The Congregationalists have three colleges and two junior colleges. The

³ Wickey, Gould & Anderson, eds., *Christian Higher Education: A Handbook for 1940*.

⁴ *Negro Handbook*, 1942, 109.

⁵ *Chicago Defender*, Feb. 21, 1931. This college supplanted Simmons University, formerly maintained by the Colored Baptist Church.

⁶ Figures secured by correspondence with the colleges.

Board of Missions for Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church has two colleges as well as two junior colleges for women. Independent of the work of the Board, the United Presbyterians established Knoxville College and the Reformed Presbyterians Knox Academy (Selma, Ala.). Two small institutions are under the supervision of the United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples), four of the Protestant Episcopal Church, one of the Lutheran Church, and one of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, a Roman Catholic organization. Each of these churches also maintains numerous academies, high schools, industrial and normal schools, and in this field of endeavor the Quakers also share. Other denominations, notably the Unitarians, contribute to colored schools but establish no schools of their own. Southern white churches have entered the work to a limited extent. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, contributes to the support of the colleges of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Southern Presbyterians maintain a theological seminary at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Other schools and colleges are owned and controlled by various Negro churches. Seven of these are conducted by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and others by the Colored Methodist Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The colored Baptists are the most numerous of all. In 1916 they were credited with 110 schools of all grades. Today they have four schools offering four-year college courses and five others of junior college rank. Except for Wilberforce and Lincoln, all these schools are located in the old slave states.

Church aid has been supplemented by the generosity of individual philanthropists such as George Peabody, John F. Slater, John D. Rockefeller, James B. and Buchanan N. Duke, Julius Rosenwald, the Carnegie Corporation, and others. It is becoming the custom of philanthropists to give money to Negro educational establishments only in proportion as the Negroes themselves raise money for the support of these institutions. The curtailment of the Negro's earning power during the depression has affected his ability to match money granted in this way. The depression further affected Negro colleges by decreasing the enrollment, and by decreasing the number of students who paid tuition. It was inevitable that budgets were reduced, salaries being cut and paid teaching staffs decreased.

Usually the faculties of Negro colleges are entirely colored, although there may be thirty, including Fisk, Atlanta and Hampton,

in which some white teachers are employed. The tendency is to increase the proportion of colored instructors, although it is doubtful if the whites will be entirely supplanted. Some of these college teachers are outstanding leaders in their fields and have made notable contributions to research and literature. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois and Dr. George Edmund Haynes were outstanding sociologists at Atlanta and Fisk, respectively. Dr. St. Elmo Brady, a recognized authority on alkaloids, is research professor of chemistry at Fisk. Dr. Charles S. Johnson, prominent in the field of social science, is at Fisk, and here Dr. James Weldon Johnson taught English literature until his death in June, 1938. Dr. Alain Leroy Locke in philosophy, Dr. Charles H. Wesley in history, Dr. E. Franklin Frazier in sociology, Dr. W. Montague Cobb in physical anthropology and anatomy, and Dr. Abram Lincoln Harris in economics are some of the outstanding members of the staff at Howard University. The late Dr. Ernest Just, a biologist with an international reputation, was also located at Howard. Dr. Julian Lewis is associate professor of pathology at the University of Chicago.

But these are the exceptional men. The preparation of the Negro college teacher is generally inferior to the teacher in a white college. Of 1,046 college teachers covered by a government survey in 1928, 139 held no degrees, 602 had a B.A. degree or its equivalent, and only 305 graduate degrees such as M.A., B.D., or Ph.D.⁷ Writing in 1936, Professor Harry W. Greene analyzed the instructional staff of fourteen of the colleges approved by regional accrediting agencies. In a group of approximately one thousand instructors, he finds that 136 (15 per cent) held no degree, 295 (31 per cent) held a B.A. as their highest degree, and 394 (43 per cent) held an M.A. degree. It is to be inferred that the remainder held Ph.D. degrees.⁸

Not only do we find inadequate preparation; there is a deplorable paucity of scholarly production. Only 8 per cent of the teachers in private and 4 per cent in public colleges published books during the period 1926-32. When magazine articles are taken into account, the amount of publication increases somewhat.⁹ The situation is probably the result of a combination of factors:

⁷ Arthur J. Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 7, 1928, 38.

⁸ "The Negro College and Social Change," *Opportunity*, Aug., 1938, 14: 235-8.

⁹ *National Survey of the Education of Teachers*, Bur. of Education, 1933, Bull. No. 10, p. 113.

(1) heavy teaching load, (2) poor administrative organization, (3) lack of funds and low salaries, (4) lack of encouragement and incentives, (5) lack of library facilities.

With a teaching load of from eighteen to twenty-one hours per week, he (the professor) has no time for reading; but since his salary will not enable him to buy books, it works out all right.¹⁰

Many of the Negro "colleges" represent faith and hope rather than accomplishment. Some are little more than elementary schools with slender provision for secondary work. Some list college courses in their catalogs but have few, if any, students prepared to study college subjects. After an exhaustive survey of Negro education, Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones declared (1916) that

under a liberal interpretation of college work, only 33 of the 653 private and state schools for colored people are teaching any subjects of college grade.¹¹

These thirty-three colleges had a total of 1,643 students in college classes and 994 in professional courses, while about 10,000 were enrolled in elementary and secondary classes. Six years later Dr. W. T. B. Williams found that twenty-five of these institutions were carrying elementary grades, and that thirteen began their preparation as low as the first grade.¹² At this time there were about 5,000 students in college classes as compared with 29,000 in high school and elementary departments.¹³ According to the United States Office of Education, there were 38,373 students in the regular sessions of ninety-six Negro colleges in 1938.¹⁴ In August, 1941, *Crisis* found 37,203 college students in sixty-six institutions. Adding 2,790 students in Northern colleges and 143 in Howard professional schools and Meharry Medical College, it found a total enrollment of 40,136.¹⁵ There has been a growing tendency for students to congregate in a comparatively few of the stronger colleges. In 1939, twenty-three colleges had more than 500 students each, thirty-six had between 250 and 449, twenty-six had between 100 and 249, and seventeen had less than 100 students each.¹⁶

Most Southern states take genuine pride in the Negro colleges

¹⁰ Arthur P. Davis, "The Negro Professor," *Crisis*, April, 1936, 43:103-4.

¹¹ *Negro Education*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 38, i, 59.

¹² *Report on Negro Universities and Colleges*.

¹³ McCuiston, *Higher Education of Negroes*, 14.

¹⁴ Ambrose Caliver, "Collegiate Education of Negroes," *School Life*, Mar., 1941.

¹⁵ *Crisis*, Aug., 1941, 251-2. Cf. Chas. H. Thompson, "Seventy-five years of Negro Education," *Crisis*, July, 1938, 202.

¹⁶ Caliver, *op. cit.*

under their immediate jurisdiction. From 1916 to 1929 the annual income of land-grant colleges increased 442 per cent, and their property valuation increased 323 per cent.¹⁷ The State of Arkansas has completed an entirely new plant for its state Negro college, and several other states have undertaken important construction projects.¹⁸ The best of the private institutions are generously endowed. But most of the denominational colleges are seriously handicapped for want of funds. While the total amount contributed by Northern mission boards is large, it is scattered among so many institutions that none of them receive a great deal of benefit. The financial foundation of the colleges owned by Negro churches is even more inadequate. With a few exceptions, the salary scale is placed at a very low level. The highest annual salary paid the president of any Negro land-grant college is \$4,800. Most of them range between \$2,400 and \$3,600. The medium salary paid to deans in institutions of this class is \$2,167, while full professors receive an average of \$1,754.¹⁹ Though tuition rates have risen, there is no evidence that the salary scale has met with a corresponding increase. The average Negro undertaker earns more. The salaries paid in most of the church schools are even lower. Well-trained educators cannot be secured at these figures. Inadequate salaries may go far to account for the rapid turnover in the staff of some institutions. More than half the Negro colleges show a change of one-third or more of the faculty within a period of three years.²⁰ Until the Negro college can rest on a sound economic foundation, ramshackle buildings, lack of library facilities and laboratory equipment, and poorly paid (and consequently poorly prepared) faculties will result.

The founders of the early Negro colleges pictured an idealized Negro, and it was their intention to turn him into a white man as quickly as possible through pursuit of the classics. "You shall know all Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." For a decade Hampton Institute stood alone in its insistence on agricultural and industrial education. The influence of tradition is still strong.

¹⁷ Ambrose Caliver, *Education of Negroes, Biennial Survey of Education, 1928-30*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 20, 1931, i, 610.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 611; *Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 37, 1924, 78-80.

¹⁹ *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 9, 1930, ii, 864-7.

²⁰ *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, Bur. of Education, Bull. No. 7, 1929, 43; Caliver, *National Survey of the Education of Teachers*, Office of Education, Bull. No. 10, 1933, iv, 48.

Generally speaking, the curriculum is drawn up without any consideration for the needs, background and capacity of the students. Definite objectives seem to be lacking. "Looking over the recent catalogs of the leading Negro colleges," remarks Dr. Woodson, "I find their courses drawn up without much thought about the Negro."²¹ Few courses appear to give the student any knowledge of his own people, any sense of group loyalty, or any appreciation of things Negroid. While Greek has, in some instances, totally disappeared and much less Latin is required for graduation than formerly, the emphasis is still on the classics and literature. Modern languages are given an increasing space in the curriculum and the social sciences, philosophy, biology, chemistry and physics are gaining in favor. As one might expect, the humanities have a larger place in the "liberal arts" colleges. Considering the offerings, one has a right to wonder whether the Negro college graduate can properly use these things in a world which makes marked discriminations on the ground of color. Is the Negro college a kind of finishing school, teaching its students "what to say at the right moment, what to wear and how to wear it, when to tell white lies, and how to shake hands gracefully?" After a semester or two of college life, the average student—if he thinks at all—may be excused for being bewildered as he turns from his books to jazz and the brown eyes of Florence Anne.

Scholastic standards are often very low. This is particularly true of the colored church schools, some of which Dr. Jones branded as "brazen frauds imposing upon the philanthropy of Northern donors."²² The degrees of most of these are entirely without value, a fact which is recognized by Negro educators who, in choosing their teachers, usually give preference to the alumni of Northern (white) schools and colleges. The academic work of most of the land-grant colleges is likewise of low grade, the chief energies of these institutions being directed to agricultural and industrial training. The poor quality of the work is not surprising when we remember that many students come to college poorly prepared, that their attendance is intermittent due to the necessity of earning their way, and that many do not complete the course. Fisk is the only Negro college accredited by the Association of American Universities, although Howard, Lincoln, Spelman, Talladega, Morgan, West Virginia State College, Hampton, Tuskegee and a few others are rated "Class A" by regional agencies.

²¹ "The Miseducation of the Negro," *Crisis*, Aug., 1931, 28: 266-7.

²² *Op. cit.*, 151.

In 1923-4, fifty-two colleges or departments of universities offered theological courses;²³ ten years later the theological departments of twelve of these had been closed.²⁴ The academic standards of most theological departments are very low. Indeed, one church board has discontinued its seminary and now provides scholarships whereby deserving students of theology may study in the North. Dr. Williams thought that

Shaw, Virginia Union, and Howard are perhaps doing more than the others to raise the grade of their regular work to that of well-recognized theological schools.²⁵

Until 1935 not a single Southern or border state gave Negro students any opportunity for higher training. If a Southern Negro wanted to become a doctor or a lawyer, he had to go to a privately supported Negro school or to a Northern university at his own expense; Southern white students had splendid state universities maintained by the taxpayer's money. Maryland, West Virginia and Missouri provided scholarships outside the state for Negroes desiring professional training. After a legal battle, Donald Gaines Murray compelled the authorities to admit him to the University of Maryland Law School. He graduated in 1938, and two other Negroes have since attended that law school.²⁶ In 1938, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled, in the case of Lloyd L. Gaines vs. University of Missouri, that unless an "equal" law school for Negroes were established within the state, Missouri would have to admit Gaines to the University of Missouri Law School.²⁷ Other suits were filed by Negroes demanding admission to graduate schools in Missouri, Tennessee and Georgia.²⁸

Of the professional colleges, Howard University easily stands first. Law courses are given here and at the new Negro Law School at St. Louis. While it is preposterous to contend that the \$200,000 appropriated could duplicate the \$3,000,000 University of Missouri Law School,²⁹ Dean Louis E. Taylor, formerly of Howard, has done a good job. Four full-time professors and a librarian were appointed, and an initial order for a library of 13,000 volumes placed.

²³ W. A. Daniel, *The Education of Negro Ministers*, 15.

²⁴ Mays and Nicholson, *The Negro Church*, 51-7.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*

²⁶ *Crisis*, Aug., 1938, 275; Nov., 1939, 341.

²⁷ Gaines vs. Canada et al, 305 U. S. 337, 59 S. Ct. 232, 83.

²⁸ *Crisis*, Apr., Nov., 1939, 103, 341; May, 1940, 140; *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1939, iv, 10:7; July 9, 1941, 13:2.

²⁹ Some leaders of both races would like to see a first-class university, centrally located, for all the Negroes of the South, financed by all the states.

Mr. Will Shafrroth, adviser to the Committee on Legal Education of the American Bar Association, said,

In respect to the library, the physical equipment, the number of full-time teachers, admission requirements and length of course, the school fully complies with the American Bar Association requirements.

Howard University and Meharry Medical College (Nashville) are the only adequately equipped medical and dental schools available to Negroes in the South. Both are of respectable rank, but few of the graduates of either school have the requisite hospital experience for a superior rating. The Atlanta School for Social Work is the only one of its kind. Atlanta, Fisk, Shaw, Wilberforce, and Howard offer courses in education which are distinctly of college grade. Practically all the land-grant colleges as well as many others prepare Negroes for teaching. Miner Teachers' College at Washington and the Stowe Teachers' College at St. Louis are outstanding in this field. The Rosenwald Fund is helping to finance the Education Department of Fort Valley College in Georgia. At least seven schools have well-organized commercial departments. In most cases these courses are given in the high school departments, although Fisk offers college courses in accounting, banking, insurance and business law. Howard offers a two-year course in its school of Commerce and Finance.

How far Negro colleges are qualified to offer post-graduate work is a question. Only a few have attempted it. Howard, Fisk and Atlanta granted a total of 125 master's degrees in 1941. Five other Negro colleges granted a total of 20 more. It probably would be wisdom to delay the establishment of graduate schools until the existing colleges have raised their standards. It must be self-evident that these colleges cannot offer opportunities for research equal to those at standard Northern universities at which, in the past, Negro leaders have pursued graduate studies.

Most of the colleges and professional schools at the North are theoretically open to Negroes. Oberlin has been the great pioneer in blotting out the color line, and has more Negro graduates than any other Northern college.³⁰ Elsewhere the administrations show signs of alarm whenever the colored student population tends to rise above a scattered few. Princeton has never admitted a Negro to its undergraduate school. Vassar has graduated but one and

³⁰ In the past few years New York University has had the heaviest registration, the figure being 687 in 1941.

did not know it at the time. Williams tried to force a colored boy out of a college dining room. Harvard refused to admit a colored student to its freshman dormitories. Johns Hopkins barred Negro contenders from its athletic field in the South Atlantic field trials for the Olympic meet.³¹

In fact (says Dr. Dillard), children of colored families established in the North are often sent to Negro colleges in the South because of the more normal student life possible under that environment.³²

Early in the educational development of the Negro a new idea was introduced which was destined to have a profound effect upon Negro education. Foreseeing that without industrial training the Negro would lose the place which he held in the trades, General Armstrong, the founder of Hampton Institute, stressed manual training and the industrial arts. Education, he believed, meant preparation for life and not the avoidance of labor. True education involved the learning of a trade by which its possessor could make a better living. At first much of the work assigned was unskilled labor connected with the farm, kitchen and dormitory. Later trade courses and cultural subjects were added, but the emphasis of the curriculum was always the same. Hampton's latest venture is a library school, organized to meet a growing demand for trained librarians in Negro colleges and in normal and high schools and Negro branches of city libraries, North and South.

If Armstrong was the father of industrial education, Booker T. Washington became its foremost exponent and advocate. It was his mission to interpret the Hampton idea to the Cotton Belt. Washington believed that, as a race, the Negro occupied a lower cultural level than the white, and he felt that education would fail of its fundamental purpose unless this fact was recognized. Believing that the future of the Negro was on the soil, it was his object to train an industrious and intelligent middle class of colored people who would become better farmers and artisans.³³

³¹ W. E. B. DuBois, "Negroes in College," *Nation*, Mar. 3, 1926, 122: 228-30; "Where Negroes mayn't live at Harvard," *Lit. Digest*, Feb. 3, 1923, 76: 32-3; "Harvard and the Negro," *School and Society*, Feb. 3, 1923, 17: 124; "Negroes at Harvard," *ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1923, 17: 81; *New York Times*, June 2, 1932, 2: 4.

³² "The Negro Goes to College," *World's Work*, Jan., 1938, 55:337-40.

³³ B. T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 127; "Education will solve the problem," *N. American Review*, Aug., 1900, 171: 221-32.

When he went to Tuskegee, the buildings for the new college had to be built. Lumber and bricks were needed. Washington set up a saw-mill and had his students learn brick-making. Later on Tuskegee's brick-kiln found a ready market for a valuable product. Buildings had to be planned before they could be erected. This led to a class in blue-printing. Students had to be fed. Washington himself ran the first furrow in the cornfields planted about the new school. Cleanliness was insisted upon. He had an obsession about toothbrushes. In addresses which he delivered in all parts of the Union, he emphasized the dignity of labor and the need of a special education for his race which should embrace not only book knowledge, but also such arts as cooking, sewing, agriculture, carpentry, blacksmithing, plumbing, plastering, painting, masonry and other trades. The trade was the important thing; academic studies were auxiliary. Statesman that he was, he disarmed southern hostility by sweeping aside all discussion of political rights and social injustices and concentrating on the supreme necessity of making the Negro a valuable citizen. In 1892 Washington called the first annual Negro farmers' conference in Tuskegee. Next came "short courses" in agriculture, and these were followed by extension courses in which the school tried to reach out into the community beyond its walls. The influence of such methods, continued year after year, was incalculable. Today Hampton and Tuskegee are building college courses on their industrial foundation, but Tuskegee boasts that these courses are "practical." Students do not study "chemistry"; they study the "chemistry of soap making." Subjects of themes are assigned by the trade instructor and concern such things as "How to Launder a Shirt" or "How to Wire a Building."³⁴ As to the worth of Hampton and Tuskegee there can be no doubt. The great majority of Negroes do live in the South, and the great opportunity for Negroes at the South does lie in agriculture. Tuskegee is expending its strength on the agricultural side of its curriculum and upon those industries most closely related to rural life. The student may choose any one of forty-one trade courses, or work for the degree of B.S. in agriculture, mechanical industries, home economics, physical education, education, commercial dietetics (for hotel employees), or a diploma in nurse training. Hampton keeps the train-

³⁴ E. C. Roberts, "Tuskegee's Academic Department," *Southern Workman*, Dec., 1924, 53: 537-45.

ing of industrial teachers always in view, and the demand for Hampton graduates is greater than Hampton can supply. Slowly but surely these schools are working an economic revolution in the rural South. Ultimately the South will reap the benefit of a better-trained laboring class. In recent years graduates of Hampton and Tuskegee have begun to move North, and Dr. Moton claims that it is in some measure due to them that the Negro has been given a chance in Northern industry.³⁵

Hampton and Tuskegee have served as models for Negro industrial schools which have sprung up all over the South, and their graduates have played an important part in the education of Negro youth. In 1915 sixty-one institutions, public and private, "with industrial facilities" were reported by the Federal Survey on Negro Education. These schools had then 17,146 students, 1,588 teachers, and an annual income of \$1,914,587. The corresponding figures at the present time would probably show a large increase. In addition, there were 174 "literary institutions" which offered some courses in manual training and household arts. The general spread of technical education and, since the passage of the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes acts, the encouragement given vocational studies by federal subsidies have been important factors in the expansion of industrial education.

But the trend of the past fifteen years seems to be in the opposite direction. Where the industrial courses are kept up we find printing taught on primitive presses without linotypes; a class in automechanics is conducted with a wrench, a screwdriver, and an antedeluvian motor car. Too much farming is done in books, and too many meals are served on paper.³⁶ Such industrial schools do not fit their graduates for better jobs because they are entirely unacquainted with modern methods. In this mad machine age, technical education is costly and college administrations are encouraging their Negro students to enter the classical fields which do not require elaborate laboratory equipment. The Report of the Committee on Vocations of the National Conference on Fundamental Problems in the Education of Negroes (Washington, 1934), found three times as many students in Negro colleges taking "liberal arts" courses as were taking "practical arts" courses.

The utilitarian program of Tuskegee appealed strongly to the

³⁵ Article in Locke (ed.), *The New Negro*, 323-32.

³⁶ Frank Horne, "The Industrial School in the South," *Opportunity*, May, 1935, 13: 136-9.

Southern whites. Washington's philosophy loosened the purse strings of philanthropy and funds came pouring in. But his doctrines did not go unchallenged. Some of his own race saw in his policy and educational practice merely an acceptance of intellectual and social subordination; and these principles gave rise to a controversy between the proponents of industrial education and those of the traditional classical training. "Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?" inquired Dr. DuBois.³⁷ Even in Tuskegee,

Some thirty of his (Washington's) chief teachers are college graduates. . . . And yet one of the effects of Mr. Washington's propaganda has been to throw doubt upon the efficiency of such training for Negroes as these persons have had.³⁸

Dr. Kelly Miller, dean of Howard University, declared,

The man with the hoe is of all men most miserable, unless, forsooth, he also has hope. . . . We cannot reach the sky on a pedestal of brick and mortar; and all attempts to do so must end in bewilderment and confusion, as it did on the plains of Shinar in days of old. The architect must plan before the artisan can execute.³⁹

There is, of course, much to be said for both viewpoints. Elementary education, industrial education and farm demonstration work is the great need of the illiterate masses. This need Washington and his disciples have striven valiantly to fill. But no race can go far without leaders, and for these an entirely different type of training is essential. The professional classes which serve Negroes must be recruited from their own race. The very fact that social separation exists demands it. The Negro doctor needs a training no less thorough than a white doctor, for disease is no easier handled in a black than in a white skin. The colored lawyer must have an equal training if he is to protect his clients from injustice. Unless we are to have an inferior type of Christianity, Negro ministers must be properly trained. Increasing concentration of Negro population in urban centers has developed Negro business enterprise of every type, and these create a demand for accountants and secretaries. Agricultural and industrial schools cannot fill these needs. The public schools demand teachers and these must be trained in normal schools. But from

³⁷ "On the Training of Black Men," *Atlantic*, Sept., 1902, 90:289-97.

³⁸ Washington, DuBois, et al, *The Negro Problem*, 73-4.

³⁹ "The Negro and Education," *Forum*, Feb., 1901, 30:693-705.

whence will come the normal school teachers if not from the colleges?

There are doubters who fear that the race cannot produce teachers and administrators of ability. The answer is found in the fact that, almost without exception, Negro colleges in the South now have Negro presidents and Negro faculties. Although some administrators have been unable to cope with their problems, many of these colleges are successfully managed. There is no reason to think that the supply of ability is exhausted. Some two hundred Negroes have been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Since 1876, one hundred and eighty-eight have received the Ph.D. degree from outstanding universities.⁴⁰ There can be no question that Negroes are meeting the requirements of our best colleges and, in some instances, are distinguishing themselves for brilliant and thorough scholarship.

A practical question concerns itself with the extent to which college training fits Negroes for life. More than once it has been intimated that students graduating from Negro colleges can find no employment suitable to their talents. From time to time have come rumors of colored college men working at menial service. Just as in the case of white students, so it is probable that many Negroes are eligible for membership in the "Association of Unemployed College Alumni." But surveys conducted from time to time indicate that most of them ultimately become adjusted. A majority of the liberal arts colleges send their graduates into teaching and the ministry. An increasing number are going into the professional schools—law, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. Social work and business claims others. Professor Greene finds that 95 per cent of the holders of Ph.D. degrees are teaching. Howard University had forty-one such persons on its staff in 1934-5; more than a score were employed at Atlanta and Fisk. Five were college presidents; ten were deans of colleges. One was

⁴⁰ Harry W. Greene, "The Ph.D. and the Negro," *Opportunity*, Sept., 1928, 6: 267-9; "Negro Holders of the Ph.D. Degree," *School and Society*, Apr. 16, 1932, 25: 542-4; "The Number of Negro Doctorates," *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1933, 38: 375; "Present status of Negro Doctorates," *ibid.*, Sept. 22, 1934, 40: 388-9; "Sixty Years of Doctorates conferred upon Negroes," *J. of Negro Education*, Jan., 1937, 6: 30-7. Of this group of doctorates, Chicago conferred 19, Harvard 15, Columbia 14, Cornell 16, Pennsylvania 12, Ohio State University 16, Illinois 12, and Yale 6. Nine were secured abroad: University of Paris 2, and one each from Jena, Heidelberg and Bonn (Germany), London, Edinburgh, Vienna, and McGill (Canada). The fields represented were education 22, sociology 15, chemistry 14, history 9, English 7, agriculture 7, philosophy 6, French 5, economics 5, religion 5, zoology 5, and the remainder in other fields.

on the staff of the University of Chicago, another at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Two were in the service of the federal government, three were research and social welfare workers. Dr. Richard R. Wright, Jr., and Dr. Carter G. Woodson were editors of well-known journals.⁴¹

There are entirely too many Negro "colleges." In its present state of intellectual poverty the Negro race is not able to furnish sufficient students for their maintenance as the existence of elementary and secondary courses eloquently testify. In trying to do all the work from the first grade through the senior college year, they have set themselves an impossible task in view of the small resources at their command. The Negro college cannot function efficiently until it is relieved of the burden of preparatory training. If the college work could be centered at half a dozen of the leading institutions, there would be less competition for students and for funds. With the resources of many institutions merged into the support of a smaller number of teachers, salaries could be placed on a standard basis which would increase the efficiency of the personnel. The remaining colleges could then devote themselves to preparatory work, and all would be benefited.⁴²

In 1929 three colleges at Atlanta were merged. Morehouse was formerly a Baptist college for men, while Spelman was an outstanding Baptist women's college. Atlanta University was formerly a Congregational coeducational college. Atlanta University is now doing only graduate and professional work, while Morehouse and Spelman are carrying the college load. Clark University, Morris Brown, and Gammon Theological Seminary, also located at Atlanta, have not remained unaffected by this merger. At New Orleans, Straight College, a Congregational school, and New Orleans, Methodist, together with the Flint-Goodrich Hospital, have merged into a new institution named the James H. Dillard University. Early in 1931 the Baptists merged four of their colleges in Texas, the educational work being centered at Guadalupe College at Seguin. Other consolidations have been discussed, but the difficulty of uniting colleges under the control of different religious denominations is a difficult obstacle. At the same time progress has been made in shuffling off the preparatory departments. Several colleges have dropped their ele-

⁴¹ Greene, "Sixty Years of Doctorates conferred upon Negroes," *op. cit.*

⁴² *Vide* V. V. Oak, "What is wrong with Negro Colleges?" *Abbott's Monthly*, Apr., 1931.

mentary grades entirely.⁴³ Perhaps further progress would be made if more care were taken in the selection of officials for Negro colleges. Administrative posts are generally determined by "pull." Especially is this true where the institution is financed by the state.

One of the most serious difficulties at the present day is that of finding employment for students. A large proportion of the jobs formerly held by students have been taken by whites; yet there is a rapidly increasing number of young Negroes who, if they attend college, must earn a portion or all of their expenses. Unlike the colleges of their white contemporaries, Negro institutions of higher learning are inadequately provided with scholarships and student loan funds. The most unfortunate circumstance is that the young men whose education must be terminated because work is not available are among the most promising members of their race—a race which is already handicapped for want of leaders.

Still another of the hindrances to progress in Negro education lies in the failure of the Negro college to convince the Southern whites that education makes the Negro a better citizen or a better workman. While college training is as necessary to Negro leaders as to white, there are too many young colored men who seem to regard their degree as a patent of nobility, and are unwilling to do any kind of useful work. Others, under the impression that they are "leading" their race, have become agitators. These have been of little value in winning Southern support for Negro education. Dr. Booker T. Washington gave a correct summation of the situation when he said,

Just so soon as the Southern white man can see for himself the effects of Negro education in the better service he receives from the laborer on the farm or in the shop, just so soon as the white merchant finds that education is giving the Negro more wants and more money with which to satisfy these wants, thus making him a better customer; when the white people generally discover that Negro education lessens crime and disease and makes the Negro a better citizen, then the white taxpayer will not look upon the money spent for Negro education as thrown away.⁴⁴

Dr. Ambrose Caliver, Specialist in Negro Education at the

⁴³ "Negro Universities and Colleges," *School and Society*, Mar. 31, 1923, 17: 350-1.

⁴⁴ "Chapters from My Experience," *World's Work*, Apr., 1911, 21: 14230-9.

United States Office of Education, thinks he sees the following trends in Negro education in the United States: (1) Enrollments will continue to increase. The enrollments in colored high schools are increasing, and as high schools and colleges are made available to Negroes it is reasonable to expect that the college enrollment will rise. (2) Public support for the higher education of Negroes will continue to increase. This is indicated not only by increases in capital outlay from public funds, but also by the increased facilities for professional and graduate work made necessary by the Gaines decision. (3) Certain privately controlled institutions will receive greater financial support from private philanthropy. As these institutions show greater willingness to adjust their programs to community needs and greater effectiveness in cooperation which eliminates duplication of effort, they are more likely to receive such support.⁴⁵ To the present writer, it seems that a fourth trend is observable. The institutions with the largest endowments are either controlled by bi-racial boards or by national denominational boards which control the investment policies of the college funds. The same situation prevails at Virginia Union, Talladega, Wiley and Bennett College for Women which have recently conducted successful campaigns for increasing endowment. Therefore, in order to attract funds, there will be a tendency to invite whites to participate on boards of trustees. There are Negro colleges who are refusing to adopt this policy on the ground that they wish to prove that the Negro is capable of operating his own institutions. Perhaps he is, but these colleges are being outdistanced by colleges having all-white or bi-racial boards of control.

⁴⁵ Caliver, "College Education of Negroes," *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEGRO CHURCH

With few exceptions, the slaveholders were members of the American branch of the Church of England. While not propagandists, they did not wish their chattels to practice pagan rites, and were anxious that their slaves should have some religious incentives. The Episcopal clergy were not indifferent to the spiritual needs of the slave population. There are frequent references in the early records which show that slaves were baptised and admitted to church membership. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was incorporated in 1701. In the next year the Society sent its first missionary to the Negroes in South Carolina, and soon began missionary work among the slaves of other colonies.¹ In time the erection of galleries in the church building made provision whereby slaves could attend religious worship without social contact with whites.

But the ritualistic services of the Episcopal Church did not appeal to the Negroes. They preferred the more spontaneous preaching of the Methodist and Baptist itinerants, whose gospel ignored present ills or counseled the black to bear them patiently, "rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Tribulations of this world appeared but a preparation for the blessings of the next. As they listened to graphic word pictures of the joys of heaven and the torments of the damned, the slaves were seized with hysteria and eagerly sought salvation. The result was that practically all the slaves were converted to some sort of Calvinism, and the bulk of their descendants remain pious and hell-fearing Christians.

Neither the Congregationalists nor the Presbyterians were successful in proselyting Negroes. Though the former were leaders in the anti-slavery movement, the evangelical sects had preempted the field and the records do not show any considerable number of Congregational Negroes until after the Civil War. The Presbyterian divines were even less successful, probably because their appeal was too intellectual. Nor did the Catholics make

¹ Harrison and Barnes, *The Gospel among the Slaves*, 41-8.

much progress. Much of the Catholic service is conducted in a language which the Negro does not understand, and this leaves little opportunity for him to express his feeling. It was not until after the World War, when the Negro troops had told of the work of the Knights of Columbus, when the Catholic Church began to proclaim that employers of labor are "morally bound to make serious effort to employ the competent Negroes who apply,"² and when the Ku Klux Klan had attacked Catholicism as well as asserted white supremacy, that any considerable number of Negroes accepted the Church of Rome.

To a great extent the Negro members of various religious denominations have withdrawn and formed independent churches. The schism first appeared at the North, long before the Civil War, where the blacks were able to worship the white God—but only from the gallery. The free black brethren were dissatisfied with the status thus assigned them by white Christians. It did not seem consistent that some of those who had been admitted into Christian fellowship should be assigned to inferior positions in the church and denied the privilege of participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They therefore withdrew and formed congregations of their own. In 1816 a number of these congregations were merged to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church of which Richard Allen became the first bishop.³ Another group of seceders from Methodism organized the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at New York in 1821. Both were composed mainly of Northern Negroes. The bulk of Negro Methodists resided at the South and were either members of white congregations or of Negro churches unaffiliated with any denominational body. After the Civil War separate colored churches sprang up everywhere, and in 1870 the Methodist Episcopal Church South set aside its colored members as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. About the same time 70 per cent of the Negro Presbyterians left the parent church and established their own body. Most of the Negro Baptists were members of white churches until the Civil War. Even after they were organized in separate congregations, white and colored Baptists remained in the same conventions. Increasing pressure for self-determination led to the organization of an independent Baptist Church in 1895.

² "Conference Speakers ask Industrial Justice for Negro Workers," *National Catholic Welfare Conference*, bulletin, 1928, p. 31.

³ Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 13.

The religious census of 1936 revealed thirty-three denominations that are entirely Negro.⁴ The last reported split between white and colored churches was the withdrawal of the Negro Seventh Day Adventists in 1929.

About 5,000,000 Negroes are members of these separate denominations. By far the largest group is the Negro Baptists with 3,782,000 members. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has 493,000, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church 414,000, and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church 270,000. These four bodies include 88 per cent of all the adult Negro church members in the United States. Something over 600,000 still belong to white denominations. The Methodist Episcopal Church has 193,700, the Roman Catholics 137,600, the Northern Baptist Convention 45,000, Episcopalian 29,700, and the Disciples of Christ and Congregationalists smaller though considerable numbers.⁵ Even in those denominations which have not separated, Negro leaders have started movements for a larger measure of ecclesiastical control.

The unlettered Negro of the rural South is religious by nature. He has a childlike simplicity in the presence of forces he does not understand. He does not fear death, for he believes members of the true faith will be saved. His goal is to "walk into Jerusalem just like John." His theology is usually traditional and orthodox. There may be a few modernists among his number, but the great majority cleave to "the old time religion." This means that the crude Negro has adopted the outward forms of Christianity, but is not seriously interested in its ethical features. He believes that religion has to do with states of ecstasy, and but little to do with morals. Believing in the personal presence of God, the Negro brings to Him the most minute problems for solution. He likes to "talk with God" and "to feel His spirit." The result of such personal communion is "good feeling." In both preaching and prayer, the emphasis is largely on emotional experience and especially on fear and escape from it. He does not conceive of God as a Father providing good things for the children whom He loves; but rather as Jehovah, Lord of Hosts, casting into eternal brimstone those who do not obey His commands. This type of religion calls for a noise-producing preacher and a sermon with an abundance of "rousement." Even graduates from accepted theological schools

⁴ Bur. of Census, *Brief Summary of Statistics for Negro Churches: 1936, 1926.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

who enter the Church with the idea of preaching an ethical gospel are frequently forced by their congregation to abandon this in favor of the "rousements."⁶ In educated circles there are, of course, many who can enjoy an intellectual sermon; but congregations in which these people predominate are scarce. It requires no little courage for an educated Negro preacher to uphold his ideals in the face of waning popularity and threatened defeat. "His mission is to substitute instruction for emotionalism and to wed morality to religion; and that is to say that his mission is nothing less than revolutionary."⁷

Since freedom a contest has developed in the Negro church between a small, though growing, progressive element who think of religion in terms of Christian experience and a conservative group who think in the traditional terms of revelation. To the progressives, religion and education are inseparable since an undeveloped mind can have no clear understanding of the nature of God. They think of the Church as existing for the good of the individual. They demand a change in the worship, the use of classical music supported by organ or piano, a sermon with less of the other-worldly attitude and more applicable to the problems of to-day, and a re-evaluation of amusements condemned as sinful, such as theater-going, card-playing and dancing. To the conservative such ideas are rank heresy. The church is the end in itself, and its dogmas must be accepted without question lest the wrath of God descend on the congregation.

The Negro Church has been aptly described as "the central point around which all Negro life revolves." The church building is not only a sanctuary; it is a social center for the race. Negroes of all classes attend church whether they derive any religious benefits from it or not. In the rural districts it is the only escape from monotony. People gather to exchange bits of gossip and hear the news. Friendships are formed and courtships begun. In the small cities, outside the church and lodge, there is practically no recreation for Negroes. Often they are not admitted to white theaters and have no amusement halls of their own. Unless the natural craving for recreation is met it is apt to seek criminal outlets. And so the Church provides literary entertainments, stereopticon and moving pictures, programs by

⁶ W. D. Weatherford, *Negro Life in the South*, 131; *The Negro from Africa to America*, 333; Mays & Nicholson, *The Negro Church*, 91.

⁷ R. C. Clark, *A Sketch of the Religious History of the Negroes in the South*, 23.

traveling lecturers and elocutionists, concerts and light operas. On Sunday afternoons many churches have an open forum. There are week-day Bible schools and debating clubs. The Business Men's League, trade associations, and even political meetings are held in the church. Occasionally one finds sewing and cooking classes and handicraft work. Many a person, not particularly spiritually inclined, has been drawn to the church by becoming interested in one of its subsidiary organizations. However, this social program is not carried far enough. The conservative majority do not look with favor upon church basket ball teams, cooperation with the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A., or Boy and Girl Scouts. Only in the last two decades have some progressive leaders succeeded in introducing a program to include organizations appealing to every class in the congregation.

The Negro Church owns a vast amount of property. In 1936 the value of 34,250 churches was reported as \$164,531,531. Much of this sum was raised through nickel and dime contributions from Negroes themselves. Some was given by Southern white people as individuals and by missionary agencies of Northern white churches. The annual expenditures in religious effort for 37,308 churches (95.1%) is nearly \$28,000,000,⁸ virtually all of which comes from the race itself. In addition to maintaining churches, these funds are used to support denominational schools, hospitals and orphan asylums, while almost every colored denomination supports one or more missionaries in the West Indies and various parts of Africa. This amount is a decrease of more than \$15,000,000 over 1926. The cut was probably due to prevalence of unemployment, forced reductions of preachers' salaries and the curtailment of other church activities, as well as economies in matters of repairs.

The Church serves as a bureau of charities. According to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, the number of appeals for aid from Negroes was surprisingly small. This was partly explained by the work of the churches in relieving needy Negro families.⁹ The church cares for the sick and makes provision for the poor who die. It operates benefit societies and orphan homes. During the northward movement, committees of the Olivet Baptist Church of Chicago met incoming trains. They helped the migrants to find rooms. The church maintained an employment bureau. During five years it found jobs for 1,100 Negroes.¹⁰ It

⁸ Bur. of Census, *op. cit.*

⁹ *The Negro in Chicago*, 144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

maintained a working girls' home, conducted educational and industrial classes, and a health department where doctors and nurses gave instruction in first aid and sanitation. Small wonder that the Church was the first place to which the Southern migrant turned his steps, and that the growth of the church membership was so phenomenal during the migration period.

The Negro Church is the largest and most powerful institution controlled by the race today. It touches the masses as no other institution does. What it commands, they generally will do. It is natural that such an organization should wield much political influence. While the Church is not a political organization, Negro clergymen frequently endorse candidates and use their influence to elect them to office. No movement can get the support of the people unless it has their sanction.

The most conspicuous non-religious work of the Church lies in the field of education. Not only is the Church doing work which properly belongs to the state in the conduct of elementary and secondary schools, but most Negro denominations have several church schools, nominally of college grade, located in different parts of the country. These churches have rightly judged that the most effective advancement of the colored people, religiously and otherwise, will be through training capable leaders. White Presbyterians and Congregationalists have been especially active in supporting Negro schools, but their work has not resulted in any large increase in the number of communicants.

All churches are not equally influential as community centers. In the rural districts people live far apart and generally are densely ignorant. Tenancy causes a shifting of population from one plantation to another, which gives the minister a new congregation every year. It is impossible to attempt any program which will require time for its execution. Then, too, the minister must give his attention chiefly to some other occupation, for his people can rarely pay him more than \$500 a year; often not more than \$100. Many a country church holds services only once or twice a month. If a minister is able to secure several charges he may do well enough financially, but a non-resident cannot do many things which a minister should do for his community, and a shepherd who is absent from two to four weeks between sermons leaves the devil a good deal of time to get in his innings.

The worship is simple: scripture reading, singing, preaching and prayer. The country preacher is concerned with emotion

rather than thought. The sermon is often little more than a wild chant, interspersed with "Amens" and "Hallelujahs." The prayers consist in self-denunciation and pleas for forgiveness, and nearly always end with expressions anticipatory of the joys of the after-life. The collection taken, the congregation retire to their homes until the next sermon gives occasion for a similar renewal of their spiritual strength. The occasions for large accessions to the church are not the regular preaching days. These are conducted chiefly for the edification of the "elect." In July and August it is customary for the rural districts to hold revival services which are strangely reminiscent of the protracted camp meeting of the western frontier. People come from miles around and when the hell-scared sinners begin to weaken, the wildest excitement prevails.¹¹ Hundreds of "converted" swarm to the "anxious seat" where their friends whisper counsel that they may help them "find the way." Most of these "sinners" have good intentions, although a few months are sufficient to take them back to their former mode of life.¹²

The rural Sunday school is too often conducted as a separate institution. The workers who direct it are not necessarily conspicuous in the church itself. The standards of teacher selection are necessarily low and the possibility of teachers receiving training is remote. The children who attend are taught catechism formulae but no attempt is made to expound Biblical truths with a view to character building. What is taught seldom influences a life, for no attempt is made to explain the meaning of the words learned. Mid-week services are seldom held and poorly attended. Young people's groups have practically no program. Under such conditions, it is not surprising to find the rural church losing ground. The building is less frequented than formerly, and the people spend their money for the gratification of needs which the Church does not supply. The pastor does not think of this as resulting from any shortcoming of the Church itself, but, viewing all human conduct in terms of sin and righteousness, regards modern youth as belonging to a lost estate.¹³

The leader of a people should be a man of broad culture; but, as a rule, the rural preacher is not well-prepared for his work. He is apt to have little education and he may be entirely

¹¹ W. E. B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 190; C. G. Woodson, *The Rural Negro*, 160-4.

¹² Woodson, 165.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 171-2.

illiterate. When, as sometimes happens, the landlord builds the church and pays a minister to preach to his Negroes, naturally he is primarily interested in keeping his job and is apt to talk about heaven and keep quiet about unjust treatment on earth. The minister who can be depended on to preach the "right" doctrine is acclaimed a wise leader. The whites will assist in building his church and perhaps give him presents of old clothes or even cash. But his sermons are censored, and he is not allowed to do anything which might cause dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. Of late white religious agencies are giving special training to ministers who will work among rural people. Most denominations hold special schools for Negro preachers from four to six weeks each summer. While this may eventually improve their intelligence, it will not make them independent of landlord or other reactionary social control.

In the small towns and cities the economic status of the Negro is not quite so low as in the rural districts. Here the church is better built, and services are generally held every Sunday. Everyone who claims to be respectable is a member of the Church or at least attends it. Here, perhaps, the influence of the Church is strongest. Often it is the only public place owned by Negroes or entirely at their disposal. It is the center for leisure time activities. The pastor and his wife are social leaders. Perhaps he will encourage the brightest boys and girls to attend high school and college. He administers estates, and gives advice concerning most lines of Negro business. He stands for his people in court, and between them and their white neighbors. In times of racial trouble he is a most valuable person in helping to restore order.

In the large city the situation is different. Here the Church shares the field with the labor union, the social club, and the political organization. In its educational functions it meets competition from the public high schools, free lectures and free libraries. It is not necessary to go to church to find out what is going on; the Negro press supplies the news. The Y.M.C.A. furnishes a religion related to the development of mind and body. Instead of having a monopoly of the Sabbath, the Church must compete with radio, cabarets, moving picture theaters, skating rinks, baseball games, pool rooms, race tracks, dance halls and amusement gardens, as well as with Sunday labor and Sunday picnics. There is greater difference between rich and poor, and

for Negroes there is unemployment and high rent. Yet under these conditions we have the largest and most successful Negro churches. The Abyssinian Baptist Church has over 14,000 members.^{13a} A Philadelphia church claims 12,000 members.¹⁴ Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago reports nearly as many.¹⁵ While some rolls are known to be padded, a recent study, after careful checking, shows forty-seven churches with a membership of more than 1,600 each, and forty-nine others with more than one thousand members each.¹⁶ During the migration period the membership of Northern Negro churches increased so rapidly that the institution was unable to care for all who sought its ministrations. Fifteen new churches were organized in Chicago in 1918. Others were formed at St. Louis, Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, New York, Pittsburgh and elsewhere.

The membership of most Sunday schools is less than half the church attendance. Fully seventy-five per cent of those who attend are children. Young people's organizations are usually found under such names as Young People's Union, Epworth League and Christian Endeavor. The purposes of such groups vary from Bible story to social gatherings. Many of them are managed by older people who plan the programs almost entirely in terms of adult experience.¹⁷

While many of the buildings in the large cities are poor and uninviting, there are congregations that worship in splendid structures. The St. Philips Protestant Episcopal Church in Harlem is a \$300,000 Gothic edifice in stone and tawny brick. On 138th Street stands the beautiful Abyssinian Baptist Church, designed by a Negro architect, and built by a Negro contractor with Negro labor. The Metropolitan Baptists have taken over a handsome stone structure which originally belonged to a white congregation.

The personality of the pastor is the most important factor in the large Negro church. These men usually have been trained in theological schools of good standing. They know that most of their congregation live and work under discouraging conditions, being constantly reminded that they are members of an "in-

^{13a} Miles Mark Fisher, "The Negro Churches," *Crisis*, July, 1938, 220; *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1939, viii, 7; *Time*, June 15, 1942, 71:39.

¹⁴ Mays & Nicholson, *op. cit.*, 106.

¹⁵ *The Negro in Chicago*, 143.

¹⁶ Mays & Nicholson, 105.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 135-6.

ferior" race, and suffering for many things of which they are not guilty. It is not surprising if the preaching is "other worldly" and if the minister definitely tries to enable his people, for a while at least, to feel that there is a God who does not blame them for being black.

But there are other churches "whose services can be described by no better term than religious hysteria." These are found in some congregations of the regular denominations, and also in sects established by some cult leader such as the "Saints of Christ," the "Pillar and Ground of Truth," and the "Church of the Temple of Love." To-day, the most widely-known cult leader is Father Divine, who calls himself Lord God Jehovah Emmanuel of the Universe. Father Divine was formerly Joe Baker of Alabama. Now he rides in a Rolls Royce, flitting from one "heaven" to another as he is worshipped by thousands of Negroes who think that he is God. He urges them to relax in their "conscious mentality" and to trust and obey him. Heaven, he says, is "tangibleatable"; "it has been tangibleated, and it can be retangibleated; and it can and will continue to materialize, and personify and rematerialize and repersonify, for the great materializing process is going on"—whatever that means! It is estimated that he spends a million and a half dollars a year on his various "heavens." Where he gets the money is one mystery. The "faithful" say it comes from heaven. Probably a large part of it comes from his "angels" who have given everything they possess to "Father," including their weekly wages. "He who would enter the Kingdom of God must have nothing he can call his own." In exchange, Father Divine gives them beds to sleep in, clothes to wear, sees that they have a job, and feeds them with chicken dinners with "all the trimmings." It is, indeed, "truly wonderful." Most churches of this type are of an ephemeral character. They are usually quartered on the ground floor of a store building, while the upper stories serve as a residence for the minister or other tenants. Their services are characterized by frenzied singing, moaning and shouting, bodily gyrations, and rolling on the floor. The minister throws his sentences as recklessly as his congregation throws dice, not knowing how they will land but hoping for the best. It is not unusual to find marked survivals of voodooism. These churches are not only futile in themselves but positively harmful for they draw people from well-directed and ably-led church organizations.

Islam,¹⁸ Baha'ism, the Moorish Science Temple of America, Maya worship, and Buddhism make non-Christian appeals to Negroes. There is also a movement into such groups as the Swedenborgians, Unity, Christian Science, and Jehovah's Witnesses. But perhaps most significant of all is the increase of agnosticism.¹⁹ After all, the Brotherhood of Man is a beautiful theory. But do white Christians practice it?

The slave system caused a deterioration of morals. The chastity of female slaves was not highly valued and masters were not likely to rebuke young girls who became mothers without waiting to be wives. These conditions are reflected in the present-day morals of many rural Negroes. While there are individuals who have adopted higher standards, the Negro masses do not attach sufficient significance to the marriage tie, and their promiscuity has been commented on by many writers. Matings are consummated without any regular marriage ceremony; divorces are equally informal. If a man and woman wish to live together, they do it. They separate when the whim dictates. What is wrong depends upon what a community sets up as wrong; a bigamist does not lose caste where bigamy is generally practiced. Some of the black peasants of the rural South live together in what are known as "bedding" agreements. Such a contract is made for economic reasons. The man wishes help with his cotton; the woman wants employment for herself and children. The result is an informal agreement to live together during the crop season. When the cotton is picked and sold the woman will get her wages, and perhaps both will form other "bedding" agreements the next year. In the cities the Negro quarter is often located near the segregated vice district. Here young children are initiated into sensuality and girls of twelve are frequently found to have venereal diseases. Moral lapses are not a bar to church membership. The Church takes all who come on their own "profession of faith," that is on good intention and not on a certificate of past character. The pastor cannot afford to be too strict as to morals because many of his best paying members are known to be erring, and if they were dismissed from his congregation, other religious groups would receive them. However, morality inside the Church is generally higher than that of non-church members.

¹⁸ At one time Islam had 5,000 Negro followers in Detroit. Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *Amer. J. of Sociology*, May, 1938, 43:894-907.

¹⁹ Fisher, *op. cit.*

A striking defect in the Negro church is the moral and academic unfitness of many of the Negro clergy. In 1903 Atlanta University addressed a questionnaire to two hundred Negro laymen asking their opinion of the moral character of Negro preachers. It is surprising that nearly all made charges of deceit, dogmatism, laziness, ignorance, dishonesty in handling church funds, drunkenness, and sexual impurity.²⁰ At a recent conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church two bishops were suspended for embezzling church funds.²¹ Seduction of women in the congregation is no uncommon occurrence. "Frock-coated crooks and libertines" is a term which Mr. George S. Schuyler recently applied to the clergy of his race.²² In addition to lack of moral character, the Negro minister is usually deficient in education. Less than a fourth of the urban ministers hold B.D. or B.Th. degrees.²³ For three Negro bodies the census returns show that 62 per cent of the urban and 83 per cent of the rural ministers were not graduates of either seminaries or colleges.²⁴ The situation is at its best in the cities of the Atlantic coast where slightly less than half the ministers are not college or seminary graduates, and worst in the Southwest where three-fourths of the urban and nine-tenths of the rural ministers are without such training.²⁵

Only an enlightened ministry (says Rev. Benjamin E. Mays) will be able to command the respect of the trained Negro. We are training men and women away from respect for an untrained ministry, and we are training them away from religion as presented and interpreted by an inadequately trained clergy. We have done all too little to prepare a ministry that can lead the more enlightened Negro who, in many respects, is religiously illiterate and, for that reason, is often anti-religious.²⁶

In many instances the Negro preacher has not been ordained or licensed by any religious denomination, but the refusal of a church conference to license an applicant does not necessarily keep him from preaching. Among rural people there is a belief that the preacher is God's prophet and that, if God "calls" him, he has no

²⁰ Atlanta University Pubs., *The Negro Church*, No. 8, p. 154f. *Vide* James D. Corrothers, *In Spite of the Handicap*, 167-8.

²¹ *Christian Century*, June 8, 1932, 49:750.

²² "Black America begins to doubt," *American Mercury*, April, 1932, 25: 423-30.

²³ Mays and Nicholson, *op. cit.*, 17; Cf. Fry, *op. cit.*, 64-6.

²⁴ Fry, *op. cit.*, 66, 70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; Mays and Nicholson, *op. cit.*, 42.

²⁶ Mays, "The Most Neglected Area in Negro Education," *Crisis*, Aug., 1938, 268.

need of academic preparation. This belief has been challenged in the cities where the minister no longer holds a position of leadership simply because he is a minister. As a rule members of other professions receive a higher academic background than the ministry requires, and to that extent the importance of the ministry in furnishing urban leadership is decreasing.

Sectarianism is another great hindrance to religious progress. Nearly every community, no matter how poor, has a Methodist and a Baptist church; and these two denominations, having possession of the field, are not disposed to abandon their conquests. While the average Negro has no definite knowledge of the nature of denominational differences, he will not cooperate with those who espouse a different creed. One might as well expect Satan to abdicate his throne as to find a Methodist climbing his way to heaven on a Baptist ladder. Closely allied is the tendency to secession. Disputes over matters of church administration are likely to result in splits and the formation of a new congregation. The result is that most Negro congregations are small. The average colored rural church has 83 adult members; the average colored urban church has 199 adult members. The corresponding figures for white churches are 98 and 433.²⁷ There are over 38,000 Negro churches and only about 20,000 Negro ministers. This means that fully 18,000 Negro churches are without the services of a full-time minister.²⁸ It is estimated that from 1,500 to 2,000 vacancies occur annually through death, old age or change of occupation.²⁹ Yet only about 100 men with collegiate degrees are taking courses in theological schools.³⁰ If all the men graduating from Negro theological seminaries go directly into the ministry, less than 3 per cent of these vacancies could be filled by men whose combined literary and theological training would be equivalent to three years above high school.³¹ Those now in the

²⁷ Fry, *op. cit.*, 2.

²⁸ Statistics indicate that the situation is improving. There were 42,585 Negro churches in 1926; there were 38,303 in 1936. It is probable that cheap transportation and improved roads made consolidations possible. Migration of members in order to find work and decreased income of those who remained worked to the same end.

²⁹ William A. Daniel, *The Education of Negro Ministers*, 103.

³⁰ Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield, "The Peril of the Negro Church," *Opportunity*, July, 1933, 213-15. Cf. Mays & Nicholson, 51-5; Daniel, 51; B. E. Mays, "After College what—for Negroes," *Crisis*, Dec., 1930.

³¹ Daniel, *op. cit.*, 103.

pulpit are handicapped by their own deficiencies and the uncertain support of small congregations. The congregations, in turn, are handicapped by incapable preachers and inadequate buildings. It is futile to increase the number of ministers when congregations are unable to support those now in service. Congregations should be consolidated, but sectarian differences are too rife to permit the development of an interdenominational church such as is spreading among rural whites.

Lack of business methods is another weakness of the Negro Church. The *Federal Census of Religious Bodies* found (1926) that the annual expenditures of the urban Negro church averaged \$2,738; of the rural Negro church only \$561.³² Even on this restricted budget over 70 per cent of the urban churches are in debt, the total falling something short of \$20,000,000. While rural churches are comparatively free from debt, their financial situation is unsound since an average annual expenditure of \$561 leaves practically nothing for repairs of building, light and heat. No constructive religious program is possible. The vast majority of the rural churches know nothing of a budget or an envelope system. Since "salvation is free," few would approve a practice of excluding members simply because they do not pay. The financial needs are supplied merely by taking up a collection after the sermon, or the collection is supplemented by entertainments. The only real obligation which the congregation has to meet is the pastor's salary, and, as Dr. Woodson naively remarks, "if he is a real Christian he will not press them too heavily for that."³³ One Southern colored minister declared it to be the practice in nine-tenths of the churches in his county to allow the minister to go to conference with only a part of his salary paid. "If he is sent back to the same field the second year he finds the church still deeper on the debit side of the ledger. If he is sent to another field the debt is considered settled."³⁴

Another hopeless aspect of the Negro Church is that it has no program to appeal to modern youth. While some city churches make definite attempts to attract young people, most country preachers still declaim against modern amusements. In order to

³² Page 714.

³³ *Op. cit.*, 174.

³⁴ Holloway, *The Negro Church*, 60.

enjoy harmless pleasures which the Church would forbid, the youth go to the city where they have learned to indulge in other things which are more harmful. If they return, they may attend services for the sake of social contact, but they cannot be frightened into "saving their souls" and they laugh contemptuously at the danger of God's vengeance.

Lastly, there are so many non-essentials connected with the Negro Church that there is danger the side-show may swallow up the main tent. In many congregations societies and socials have multiplied to the point where the Church has ceased to be primarily a place for worship and religious instruction. Politics creep in. The election of officers consumes a great deal of time and perhaps leaves in its wake rivalries which may terminate in secession and a further weakening of the religious organism. Thus, losing its distinctively religious character, there is danger that the Church is losing power.

White churches help Negro congregations in various ways, as by building Negro churches, evangelical work through missionaries, both white and colored; Sunday school efforts, largely in the cities where white teachers are available; and educational work of all grades. The Northern churches put emphasis on church building and education; the Southern churches on evangelism and Sunday school work. In cooperation with Negro churches the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church South have fostered community centers in several Southern cities. The Methodist Episcopal Church has a full-time secretary with assistants who are studying conditions, holding social service institutes with Negro ministers and fostering church projects in community betterment. The Protestant Episcopal Church has a training school for Negro social workers, and the Congregational Church is seeking to establish a line of churches, North and South, for serving the spiritual needs of the race. But these efforts are hampered by what the Negro feels to be the insincerity of the whites. It does him little good to learn that the white man has given money to build churches in the South while at the same time he is growing rich by exploiting his own colored employees. Langston Hughes's "Good-bye Christ" expresses the reaction of a disconcertingly large number of Negroes. Conditions which the Negro sees everywhere about him are totally unrelated to the

spirit of Jesus. It is impossible for the Negro minister to rationalize a religion which preaches a gospel of brotherly love while there is a demonstrated incapacity on the part of Christianity to deal with race prejudice. The love of God may embrace all His children, but the Church of God has not reached that point. The new Negro leadership is either indifferent or hostile to the Church. White Christianity will not benefit the Negro as long as his sphere of activity is bounded on the North by a Pullman porter's job, on the South by a washerwoman's tub, on the East by relief doles, and on the West by a ditch digger's outlook. Strict justice and fairness on the part of the white church member will make it easier for the colored man to take religion seriously.

CHAPTER XV

THE NEGRO PRESS

No one can know the mind of the Negro without studying his newspapers, for here he writes for his own group and expresses what is in his soul. As a factor in molding opinion among Afro-Americans, the press stands second only to the Church in importance. The development of the Negro press falls into three periods: the pre-Civil War period, the post-Civil War period, and the twentieth century. In the first period a number of ambitious journals were founded, each with the thought of supplying propaganda which should eventually lead to emancipation. In the second period the editors were interested chiefly in securing for the newly emancipated race the benefits of freedom and the rights of citizenship. The third period is really an extension of the second in that the rights of citizenship are constantly being emphasized. It differs in that the modern newspaper is marked by a more aggressive and bitter tone. Disillusionment has succeeded protest. Suspicion has replaced confidence. Antagonism screams from every page. Especially since the war which was to make the world safe for democracy, Negro journalists have been insistent that American Negroes shall enjoy a larger measure of equality and fair treatment.

The first Negro newspaper to appear in the United States was *Freedom's Journal*, published in New York City from 1827 to 1830 by John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish.¹ The names of twenty-three other so-called newspapers published by Negroes prior to the Civil War have come down to us.² Most of them were published in New York State, but some were in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus (Ohio), Toronto and San Francisco. These papers are interesting to us because they show what free Negroes were thinking about. Today few of the editors are remembered for their journalistic work. Perhaps the most noteworthy are Cornish and Russwurm of *Freedom's Jour-*

¹ With the issue of March 21, 1828, the name was changed to *Rights of All*. Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*, 36; I. G. Penn, *The Afro-American Press and its Editors*, 26.

² Detweiler, 39.

nal, and Frederick Douglass and Richard T. Greener of the *New National Era*. Most of the papers of this period were well-written sheets, although they contained little news. Essays, biographical sketches and editorials were their chief offerings. It is unfortunate that no one seems to have been interested in preserving these early Negro newspapers. Only here and there are a few scattered copies to be found. The Douglass papers are the most numerous, although the only complete files of these were lost when Douglass' house was destroyed by fire in 1872.

Probably the most important paper in the antebellum period was the *North Star*, which Douglass published at Rochester, New York. Funds for the publication of this paper had been subscribed by friends in England, and the first issue appeared November 1, 1847. From 1850 to 1860 it was known as *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. In August 1860 it was merged with *Douglass Monthly*, a magazine begun two years earlier for English circulation, and finished its career as a monthly. The *North Star* was conducted on a higher plane than most of its predecessors. Editorials, letters and extracts from the antislavery press brought to its readers news of current abolition activities. After Douglass became a convert to the political doctrines of Gerrit Smith, his paper was an organ of the Liberty Party.³ In 1869 Douglass embarked on a final journalistic venture—the *New National Era*—which he continued to publish at Washington until 1872.

The Negroes able to support race papers and the white abolitionists taken together were usually too few to insure financial success, so the Negro press of this period had a precarious existence. Most of the papers were irregular and short lived. At the end of its first year the *North Star* would have foundered but for the generosity of an English woman, Julia Griffiths.⁴ Most of the papers which survived to 1863 suspended at that time for the Emancipation Proclamation accomplished the sole object for which they were created. There is one exception—*The Christian Recorder*⁵—although it did not continue in the form which its founders gave it.

It is difficult to distinguish between the newspaper and the magazine in the pre-Civil War period. A number of periodicals

³ Detweiler, 41-2.

⁴ Janet Marsh Parker, "Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass," *Outlook*, Apr. 5, 1895, 51: 552-3.

⁵ *Infra*, 213.

could be classed in either group. The first distinctly Negro magazine was the *National Reformer*, a monthly issued by the American Moral Reform Society of Philadelphia, probably in 1838.⁶ Its editor was William Whipper who was certainly interested in abolition, but equally interested in temperance and world peace. The *Reformer's* policies were so general that it is hard to identify it as a Negro publication, and Whipper's pacifism caused him to be criticized by other Negro journalists.

The most important magazine of the period, however, was the *Anglo-African*, which Thomas Hamilton established in New York in July 1859. According to the prospectus, the aim of the magazine was "to afford scope for the rapidly rising talent of colored men in their special and general literature." Hamilton claimed to publish only the work of colored writers, and he laid worthy pens under contribution. Alexander Crummell, Henry Highland Garnet, J. W. C. Pennington, James McCune Smith, Frederick Douglass, Martin R. Delany, Charles Lenox Redmond, Charles B. Ray, William C. Nell, William Whipper and John M. Langston are found among the contributors of the *Anglo-African*. While, as one would expect, there are many antislavery essays in its columns, there are also well-written articles on other subjects: the Darwinian theory, "Thoughts on Hayti," "The Effects of Emancipation in Jamaica," biographical sketches of Alexander Dumas and Ira Aldridge, essays on intemperance, citizenship and chess, verse and short stories.⁷ But the *Anglo-African* was premature. A Negro magazine could not exist at this time without financial support outside the race group, and a literary magazine not primarily interested in abolition could not command the subscriptions of the abolitionists who were the only class of whites interested in Negro progress.

According to I. Garland Penn, there were ten Negro newspapers in 1870 and thirty in 1880.⁸ George Williams names fifty-six periodicals in 1882.⁹ Most of them started out to achieve some single end and suspended when the need disappeared. Only four included in Williams's list have continued to the present day.¹⁰

⁶ Penn, p. 117, gives the date 1833, but Dr. Charles S. Johnson has found a bound volume of the first issue dated 1838. Johnson, "Rise of the Negro Magazine," *J. of Negro History*, Jan., 1928, 13: 7-21.

⁷ Vernon Loggins, *The Negro Author*, 210-11; Johnson, *op. cit.*, 11.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, 112.

⁹ *History of the Negro Race in America*, ii, 567ff.

¹⁰ They are the *New York Globe* (now the *Age*), *American Baptist* (Louisville, Ky.), *Afro-American Presbyterian* (Charlotte, N. C.), and *Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia).

One paper that formed an exception to the rule of quick failure was the *Elevator* of San Francisco, edited and published by Philip A. Bell and W. J. Powell (1865-1890). Another was the *Progressive American* of New York City (1871-1887). Like the newspapers, most of the magazines of the period were short-lived and without great influence.

In the meantime the Negro press, as we have it to-day, began to take form. It was only with the coming of city life that a substantial culture and economic support of a Negro press became possible. The first issue of the Washington *Bee* appeared in 1879. The Indianapolis *World* began about the same time, followed by the New York *Globe (Age)* (1882), Cleveland *Gazette* (1883), Philadelphia *Tribune* (1884), Richmond *Planet* (1884), Savannah *Tribune* (1885), Indianapolis *Freeman* (1888), and the *Afro-American* of Baltimore (1893). The success of these papers was due in large measure to the personalities of their editors. John Mitchell, Jr., of the *Planet*, Harry C. Smith of the *Gazette*, T. Thomas Fortune of the *Globe*, Christopher J. Perry of the Philadelphia *Tribune*, and William Calvin Chase of the *Bee* were as truly the makers of a "personal journalism" as were Horace Greeley or Henry Watterson. Perry died in 1920, Chase in 1921, Fortune in 1928, Smith in 1941.

The last twenty-five years have witnessed a great increase in the number of Negro papers. In 1910 Atlanta University found 288 Negro periodicals.¹¹ Of these 163 were missing from the list of titles published by Detweiler in 1921.¹² Some of them may have survived under other names, but it is evident that the mortality rate must have been high. The Great War stimulated the founding of Negro newspapers. Unwilling to trust the white press for tiding of the black regiments, the Negroes demanded newspapers of their own. While complete accuracy is impossible, the Bureau of the Census estimated that there were 339 newspapers, magazines and bulletins published in the United States by Negroes in 1940.¹³ Ten are magazines of general interest, twenty-one are fraternal organs, twenty-nine are school and college publications, seventeen educational, and sixty-seven religious periodicals maintained by their several denominational groups ranging from Baptist to Roman Catholic. There are thirteen trade and business journals,

¹¹ Atlanta Univ. Pubs., No. 14, *Efforts for Social Betterment among Negro Americans*, 114ff.

¹² *Op. cit.*, 24.

¹³ Bur. of Census, *Negro Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States*, 19.

and several music magazines and organs published by medical, scientific, theatrical and labor groups.

None of the literary magazines can boast of the age of the newspapers. Among those which have come and gone are Fenton Johnson's *The Favorite*, Anthony Overton's *Half Century*, and Willis Huggins's *Upreach*, all published in Chicago, and all similar to the popular periodicals published for a white clientele. For a while Memphis had the *Negro Outlook*, Vicksburg the *Black Man*, and New York the *Crusader* and *Messenger*. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt was *The Competitor*, published by Robert Lee Vann, editor of the Pittsburgh *Courier*. It was an illustrated monthly of eighty-four pages containing good stories and feature articles. But in spite of its excellence it joined the procession of failures.

In 1910 *The Crisis* was born. It is the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Until August 1934, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois was its editor, and he justly deserves to rank among the great journalists of his day. *The Crisis* is more distinctly a magazine than any of its predecessors have been. It is dressed in an artistic cover, often a sample of Negro feminine beauty, and contains stories, essays, sketches and poetry of a high literary quality as well as items concerning race achievement. Its editorials deal with politics, education, religion and economic questions as well as race prejudice, segregation, discrimination, social equality and lynching. There is an obvious effort not only to protest against white injustice, but also to furnish evidence of the existence of Negro culture. However, *The Crisis* is more important as an organ of protest propaganda than as a literary magazine.

Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life, first appeared in January 1923. It is a monthly magazine published by the National Urban League. Until the fall of 1928 Dr. Charles S. Johnson was its editor, and under his direction the magazine attained a high degree of excellence. Its articles have to do with Negro poets, musicians, authors, actors and artists as well as city life, the church, home, school, health, recreation and labor opportunities. It lacks the bitterness of *The Crisis*. Unlike *The Crisis*, it emphasizes Negro opportunities instead of grievances. It attempts to stimulate pride for the past achievements of the race and to show that there is hope in the future.

The *Negro World Digest*, a magazine of general interest, run-

ning about ninety-six pages, made its appearance in 1940. It is a worth-while addition to the group.

The first issue of the *Journal of Negro History*, a quarterly, appeared in January 1916, under the editorship of Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Like the *American Historical Review*, it is a journal of high standing devoted to the publication of papers dealing with Negro life and achievement. Although it numbers only twenty-eight years, it has made an immense contribution to knowledge of Negro progress. The National Medical Association publishes a quarterly which is the nearest approach to a scientific journal.¹⁴ There is also an educational magazine, *The Journal of Negro Education*, published at Howard University.

Secret fraternal orders have been multiplying in the years since the Civil War. The Atlanta *Independent* and *St. Luke's Fraternal Bulletin* are the most important organs of this class. The former, edited by Benjamin Jefferson Davis, represents the Odd Fellows. It is also a staunch Republican sheet, for Davis was the chairman of the state Republican organization. The latter, published at Richmond, Virginia, speaks for the Independent Order of St. Luke. Both carry Associated Negro Press releases and it is hard to tell whether to class them as newspapers or magazines. The *Sphinx*, *Ivy Leaf*, and *Kappa Alpha Psi Journal* are college fraternity magazines.

Of the school publications, the *Fisk University Herald* and *Shaw University Journal* are most important. The *Southern Workman*, founded by Samuel Chapman Armstrong at Hampton Institute in 1872, was for a time the most influential of this group, but has been discontinued.

During these years the Church began to sponsor a press. In 1841 the African Methodist Episcopal Church decided to publish a religious quarterly. The funds were insufficient and the paper was discontinued after a few issues. In 1848 the Church purchased Delany's *Mystery* at Pittsburgh and changed its name to *Christian Herald*. Four years later the *Herald* was removed to Philadelphia and renamed *The Christian Recorder*. The *Recorder* represents the first serious attempt of Negroes to edit a religious paper.¹⁵ It is still the official organ of the African Methodist

¹⁴ *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.

¹⁵ Detweiler, *op. cit.*, 43; Penn, *op. cit.*, 78; Eugene Gordon, "The Negro Press," *Annals of Amer. Academy*, Nov., 1928, 140: 249.

Episcopal Church. In the '70s came the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* (Methodist), the *Christian Index* (Colored Methodist), *Star of Zion* (Zion Methodist), *Afro-American Presbyterian*, *American Baptist* and the *Georgia Baptist*; in the early '80s the *Western Star* (Baptist), *Baptist Vanguard* and *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review* were added. Most of these still exist. Other church papers include the *A.M.E.Z. Quarterly Review*, *Baptist Leader* and *Voice of Missions*.

In the trade journal field we find *Postal Alliance*, *Modern Farmer*, and *Service Magazine*, the last the organ of the National Negro Business League.

Of the class of periodicals called "newspapers," the majority are of little value, being purely local in character with small circulation and no influence. Often the quality of paper and printing is poor, and grammatical and typographical errors suggest absence of proof-reading. This is not true of the large city newspapers. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, *Afro-American* (Baltimore), *Amsterdam News*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Philadelphia Tribune* and *New York Age* are the best all-around newspapers. The *Afro-American* is superior for the amount and variety of its news. The *Pittsburgh Courier* has the best editorials and also the best sports page.

The *Chicago Defender* stands in much the same relationship to the Negro press that William Randolph Hearst's papers do to the white press. Robert S. Abbott, long its editor, was admittedly a copier of Hearst's methods. The *Defender* was the first Negro newspaper to use headline streamers, sometimes printed in red ink. Whenever Abbott saw in some other paper a feature which he liked he appropriated it without hesitation. Thus "The Week," a columnist review which he ran some years ago, was obviously a copy of Brisbane's "To-day." Printed in two sections, the *Defender* has all the features of a metropolitan daily. Its correspondents cover practically every state in the union and all the important cities. Its editorials are militant and aggressive, and its ready championship of the common folk has given the paper an enormous amount of prestige among the race. It was charged that an article in the *Defender* was responsible for the riot at Longview, Texas. Governor Brough of Arkansas believed *The Crisis* and *Defender* to be at the bottom of the Phillips County atrocities. Certainly it played an important part in the migra-

tion movement. Several Southern towns have forbidden the sale of the *Defender* at news-stands, and attempts have been made to bar it from the mails.

The New York *Amsterdam-Star News* makes no pretense to covering the national field. Its particular field is New York and its special interest is everything which concerns the Negro in the world's largest Negro city. Undoubtedly the *Amsterdam-Star News* is the best local colored newspaper in the country. It has excellent editorials, and its news is gathered and written by an unusually competent staff.

In addition, the Washington *Tribune*, Houston *Informer*, Boston *Guardian*, Kansas City *Call*, Chicago *Bee*, St. Louis *Argus*, Savannah *Tribune* and Oklahoma City *Black Dispatch* deserve to be mentioned. The Washington *Tribune* gives the best reports of the Negro in politics and its views are frequently quoted by the New York dailies. The Houston *Informer* and the Boston *Guardian* are perhaps the most aggressive in their demand for entire citizenship rights in their respective sections. The *People's Voice* is a Harlem tabloid, founded in 1942.

Most of these papers are weeklies; three are semi-weeklies. The magazines are usually monthlies. Several attempts have been made to edit a Negro daily. The Cairo (Illinois) *Gazette* ran for six months in 1882 until it was destroyed by fire. The Columbus (Georgia) *Messenger* ran as a daily during its first year (1888). Then it was issued twice a week and finally appeared as a daily again. According to Penn, publication was finally suspended because its editor accepted a position in the Railway Mail Service.¹⁶ Three dailies were in existence in 1922: the Richmond *Colored American*, Washington *Colored American*, and Indianapolis *Daily Standard*, the last established in that year.¹⁷ Detweiler mentions the Richmond paper in his study,¹⁸ and Mr. Eugene Gordon speaks of the Washington *Daily American*,¹⁹ which is probably the same paper mentioned above. The Atlanta *Daily World* has run successfully for nine or ten years. There are two reasons why Negro dailies have not succeeded. First, the field is already covered by the white press, and the Negroes are so closely connected with American industry and American life that they cannot afford to neglect the great American dailies. Second, since the

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, 127.

¹⁷ George W. Gore, Jr., *Negro Journalism*.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 4.

¹⁹ "The Negro Press," *American Mercury*, June, 1926, 8: 207-15.

Associated Press refuses service to Negro newspapers it is not possible for them to secure the materials with which to publish a satisfactory daily.

Many newspapers are printed only for local circulation, and some of them probably have as few as one thousand subscribers. At least seven papers have over thirty thousand subscribers each. The Pittsburgh *Courier*, *Afro-American* and Chicago *Defender* have circulations of 50,000 or more. With circulations approaching 30,000 but probably under that figure are the New York *Age* and New York *Amsterdam-Star News*. Twelve other papers are thought to have circulations over 10,000. The combined circulation of newspapers in 1940 was 1,276,000, and 129 magazines and bulletins reported a combined circulation of 703,000 more.²⁰ But in the case of the Negro press the number of readers is greatly in excess of the number of subscribers. Papers are passed around the neighborhood until they are worn out. They are read aloud in groups of listeners in homes, in barber shops, in pool rooms; indeed, wherever a group of Negroes can be got together. Thus even those who cannot read become "readers." It probably would not be too much to say that the Negro press reaches 5,000,000 persons weekly.

The Negro newspapers represent a combined investment of about \$4,000,000 and employ considerably upwards of 6,000 persons. The most prosperous papers own their own printing plants. The Chicago *Defender* is located in its own \$200,000 building where an electric press prints and folds papers at the rate of 35,000 an hour. The New York *Age*, the Pittsburgh *Courier*, and the Norfolk *Journal and Guide* also own up-to-date plants, and most of the Negro churches have their own publishing houses. But in the majority of cases the newspaper office consists of a small rented room in the Negro business section. Here the composition is written and passed to an outside firm, possibly a white printer, to set-up and print.

Most Negro newspapers are violently race conscious. Through their columns flows the thought that the Negro is a part of America and yet has no voice in America. Especially during the World War was there a tendency toward self-assertion. This aggressive attitude did not disappear with the return of peace. The Negro editors began to search for injuries against which they

²⁰ Fred G. Detweiler, "The Negro Press Today," *Amer. J. of Sociology*, Nov., 1938, 44:391-400; *Negro Handbook*, 1942, 201.

could protest. They are practically unanimous in their suspicion of the white press. They charge that white dailies can not be trusted to tell the truth about the Negro, that news concerning Negroes is never printed unless the Negro commits a crime, and then the fact of his race is emphasized. They point out that the prominent display of the word "Negro" is no more justifiable than of "red headed" in every case where such an individual commits a crime. However, the Negro press often is as biased as the white in printing news with a racial angle. Facts are frequently distorted, rumors affecting whites are printed as facts without investigation, and sometimes are made the subject of inflammatory editorial comment. Issues raised by discrimination, segregation, disfranchisement and lynching are met by challenge. Such items as the Scottsboro case, Angelo Herndon, and suits by colored students to compel white Southern universities to admit them are featured. Naturally we are kept up to date on the anti-lynching bill in Congress, government policies (defense housing, discrimination in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, and Negroes in defense work), progress in local improvements (better schools for Negroes, street paving in Negro sections, fairer distribution of public tax money for Negro parks and other public facilities), and efforts of colored people to be fairly represented in jobs, especially white-collar positions and sales jobs in stores run by white people in Negro communities. Cases of discrimination against Negroes on common carriers and in public places are played up. Negroes charged with crime or killed while resisting arrest are sometimes treated as martyrs. The papers published in the North are the most bitter. No pains are spared to exploit the depravity of the white race. "BURLY WHITE BRUTE ATTACKS PRETTY COLORED GIRL" is a three-inch headline across the top of the front page. But the Afro-American journalist is a good business man. He realizes that newspaper readers are generally sensation seekers, and if no white evil-doer appears in the week's press dispatches, he will not hesitate to advertise the frailties of his colored brother. "PRETTY DANCER WINS \$10,000 LOVE-BALM SUIT" is a featured headline in the Pittsburgh *Courier*.

In addition to "race" and crime news and articles on politics, the more important papers carry society columns, women's and children's pages, sports, theatrical, music and radio sections, and often a "Bookshelf" where books of interest to the race are reviewed. There are always editorials, and these are often

well-written. In such articles the protest note is strong but, since the Negro is in the minority in the white man's world, nothing is carried over into action. The small town papers generally carry a large amount of plate matter. The larger papers use race syndicated features of every variety, such as "Advice to the Lovelorn," "What Society is Wearing," "How to Play Contract Bridge," or essays by George S. Schuyler or William Pickens. There is even a syndicated service which furnishes identical editorials to the papers which subscribe for them. Then there is the question-and-answer column, another column devoted to health chats, probably several columns of correspondence from readers, cross-word puzzles and all kinds of engaging brain-teasers, comic strips and cartoons, to say nothing of numerous pictures of brides-to-be, criminals, politicians, actresses and divorcees.

Where does the Negro newspaper get its news? Some items are sent in by local churches and lodges and out-of-town correspondents. Other items come through the service of clipping bureaus; and of course they clip from both white and colored exchanges. Indeed, the scissors and paste-pot method of news writing prevails to a large extent among the smaller journals. In 1919 the Associated Negro Press was formed. It is one of a number of news gathering agencies which furnishes to Negro papers a service similar to that of the Associated Press to white papers. Its correspondents are stationed at strategic points where news of interest to Negroes is most likely to occur. They send their reports to the central office at Chicago, and from there they are relayed by mail twice each week to papers subscribing to this service. Most of the better papers have New York correspondents, and a few maintain correspondents in foreign countries. The *Afro-American* sent a special correspondent to Berlin to see the Olympic Games, and another to Geneva to witness the appearance of Haile Selassie before the League of Nations.

Like the white press, Afro-American journalism derives much financial support from its advertisers. Patent medicines, cosmetics and hairdressing establishments predominate. Detweiler found twenty-five hairdressing advertisements in a random issue of a Chicago paper and twenty-two in a Memphis paper. Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, Exelento, Herolin, Kinkout, Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener, Poro College products, St. Joseph's G.F.P., drugs to enable a woman to become a mother, and other drugs guaranteed to restore vitality to "men over

forty" are found in all the important papers. Then we read of ointments for clearing dark skins, hair dyes, hair straighteners, asthma and indigestion cures, aspirin tablets, rabbit's foot good-luck charms, Joe Louis pins, spiritualists, fortune tellers, clairvoyants and faith healers. Even a church paper, the *Christian Recorder*, tells the joyful tidings that

Madame Jefferson . . . can cure any disease that you were not born with, in fact, she can locate any disease in your human body, and tell your complaint by your writing to her when other doctors have failed. . . . She has a supernatural gift. . . . Her advice on business problems is worth more than you will ever be able to pay. Madame Jefferson has discovered a wonderful hair restorative. It grows hair on bald heads. . . .²¹

There is the usual advertising of theaters, moving pictures, dance halls and cabarets, with occasional cards of schools and colleges, notices of fraternal societies, colored labor organizations and insurance companies. At election time there is a good deal of political advertising, much of this from white candidates. Many investment opportunities are offered: stocks in all sorts of corporations—many of them dishonest, real estate subdivisions, farm lands, lots in Florida and plantations in Brazil.

With hardly an exception, the Negro press advocates racial unity; the patronizing of Negro business and professional men and the development of racial art, drama and literature. This attitude can be explained partly in terms of self-interest. The obligation to support Negro business involves the support of racial newspapers which, in turn, naturally advocate support of their own advertisers. Some Negro papers show a tendency toward irreligion, possibly because Negro editors, while they approve of Christianity in principle, believe that white Christians have forsaken the teachings of the Prophet of Galilee. The journalistic skill of most of the present editors is none too high. Exceptions must be made in the cases of Robert S. Abbott, Carl Murphy, P. B. Young, Robert Lee Vann,²² and Fred R. Moore, editors of the Chicago *Defender*, the *Afro-American*, the Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, the Pittsburgh *Courier*, and New York *Age*, respectively. All are excellent editorial writers and, through their papers, exercise a considerable influence on Negro thought.

With some exceptions, the Negro press is conservative in

²¹ Issue of June 9, 1921, quoted by Detweiler, 118.

²² Abbott died Feb. 29, 1940; Vann died Oct. 24, 1940.

politics. The majority of editors have no leanings in the direction of Communism and would not care to see a Soviet government in America. Yet the utterances of some of them during the first World War gave rise to a feeling that the Negro press was not entirely loyal. The most radical were the *Messenger*, *Crusader* and *Challenge*. The *Messenger* was founded in 1917 by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. It called itself a "magazine of scientific radicalism" and made its appeal direct to "the workers" without regard to race. The *Messenger* dared to question the justice of American participation in the war and even to express admiration for the Bolshevik experiment in Russia. As the result of an article entitled "Pro-Germanism among Negroes" (1918), second-class mailing privileges were denied their paper. Eventually the sheet got into financial difficulties and had to be suspended (1924). But the influence of the *Messenger* was not lost on other Negro journals which became more radical in their discussion of race relationships. In 1919 the Department of Justice included Negro newspapers and magazines in its investigation of disloyal propaganda, concluding that the press was an important factor in fostering radicalism among the Negro race.²³

In a like vein Westbrook Pegler, syndicated columnist for the Serips-Howard newspapers, recently attacked the Negro press as disloyal. On April 28, 1942, Pegler linked the Pittsburgh *Courier* and Chicago *Defender* with *Social Justice*, now barred from the mails because of its alleged subversive content. Pegler implied that the Negro press is opposed to the war effort and took pains to point out that both weeklies were read by colored soldiers in army camps. At about the same time Virginius Dabney of the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, a self-styled "friend of the Negro," named the Pittsburgh *Courier*, New York *Amsterdam-Star News*, the N.A.A.C.P. and *Crisis* as responsible for race friction which has occurred in the vicinity of army camps, almost always between Negro soldiers and white policemen. It is true that the periodicals named have protested discriminations against Negroes both in the armed forces and in defense industries. That the Negro press is disloyal to America is untrue. Whatever his present ills may be, every intelligent Negro knows the race would fare worse under Hitler.

²³ Investigation Activities of the Department of Justice, *Sen. Doc. No. 153*, 66 Cong., 1 sess., p. 162.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEGRO AND HIS SONGS

The songs of the Southern slaves are American compositions based upon an African background. The African folk-music of the Negro was lost in the transition to America. But the emotional tone and rhythm survived and were transferred to new compositions made from the textual fragments of the hymns of white people together with a large amount of original material. Very rarely can these songs be traced to any particular author. Doubtless some of them were composed by bards such as "singing" Johnson whose methods are described by James Weldon Johnson;¹ but most slave songs were group compositions. Nearly all Negroes, no matter how illiterate, improvise readily. One member of a group will sing a line of the song, the group will sing a response, and in the meantime someone has composed a second line. Then the response is taken up again and a third line is almost certain to be ready when it is finished. Thus:

Leader: Swing low; sweet chariot,
Response: Comin' for to carry me home.
Leader: Swing low; sweet chariot,
Response: Comin' for to carry me home.
Leader: I look over Jordan, what do I see?
Response: Comin' for to carry me home.
Leader: A band of angels comin' after me,
Response: Comin' for to carry me home.

Perhaps the song is sung once and forgotten. The vast majority of folk-songs are never written and perish immediately after they are composed. If they are remembered, the probability is that they will be altered considerably before they become a part of the permanent folk-literature. Perhaps more stanzas will be added. Folk-songs have no proper ending. Several are reputed to be a hundred stanzas in length. Sometimes widely variant versions will be found in different localities.

As late as 1871 the slave songs of the South were little known to the general American public. In that year a band of students from Fisk University started north for the purpose of giving a

¹ James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, 21-3.

concert at Oberlin. Hearing their Spirituals, Henry Ward Beecher invited them to his church at Brooklyn. This was the beginning of a tour which lasted seven years. The singing Negroes were thrust off street cars, turned away from hotels, and jeered at in a hundred cities. Yet they were received by the President of the United States. They crossed the ocean to sing for the Kaiser of Germany and the Queen of Great Britain. What is more to the point, they brought back one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to enable their college to "carry on."

Some of the northerners who went South during and after the war became interested in the slave songs and a few small collections were made at that time.² The first important collection was *Slave Songs of the United States*, by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy M. Garrison. Fisk University and Hampton Institute have continued to be important centers in this work.³ Since 1914 there has been a lively interest in Negro folksongs resulting in a number of collections of which those of Krehbiel,⁴ James Weldon Johnson,⁵ Newman I. White,⁶ Dorothy Scarborough,⁷ and Odum and Johnson⁸ are only a few of the more important.

In the meantime the Negro Spirituals began to appear on the concert stage and in symphony orchestra programs. Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, Jules Bledsoe, and Miss Marian Anderson deserve

² *The Song of the Contrabands, "O Let My People Go," Words and Music obtained through the Rev. L. C. Lockwood, chaplain of the contrabands at Fortress Monroe, New York, 1861; T. W. Higginson, "Negro Spirituals," *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1867, 19: 685-94; W. F. Allen et al., *Slave Songs of the United States*, P. Smith, New York, 1867; John Mason Brown, "Songs of the Slave," *Lippincott's Mag.*, Dec., 1868, 2: 617-23; W. E. Barton, *Old Plantation Hymns*, Lamson, Wolffe & Co., Boston, 1899.*

³ John Wesley Work, *Folk Songs of the American Negro*, Fisk University Press, Nashville, 1915; Thomas P. Fenner et al., *Cabin and Plantation Songs as Sung by Hampton Students*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1901; Robert Nathaniel Dett, *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Institute*, Hampton Institute Press, Hampton, Va., 1927; Mrs. Natalie Curtis Burlin, *Hampton Series—Negro Folk Songs*, 4 vols., G. Schirmer, New York, 1918-19; Thomas Washington Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes, Wise and Otherwise*, Macmillan, New York, 1922.

⁴ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folk Songs*, G. Schirmer, New York and London, 1914.

⁵ James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Viking Press, New York, 1925; *Second Book of Spirituals*, Viking Press, New York, 1926.

⁶ Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1928.

⁷ Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1925.

⁸ Howard W. Odum & Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, Univ. of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1925.

much credit for their fine rendition of Spirituals, and Harry T. Burleigh, S. Coleridge-Taylor, J. Rosamond Johnson, Carl Diton, Nathaniel Dett, Lawrence Brown, Taylor Gordon, Edward Boatner, Clarence Cameron White, and William Grant Still have performed an equally fine service in their careful arrangement of folk songs and their musical compositions based on folk themes. But while very popular with concert-goers, the Spirituals have been carried to an alien atmosphere. They were created for group work. They are essentially congregational; not theatrical, and they cannot be used to the best advantage in solo form. As Professor Nathaniel Dett, musical director at Hampton Institute, says:

Half of its effectiveness in its home depends upon accompaniments which can be carried away only in memory. The inspiration of numbers; the overpowering chorus, covering defects; the swaying of the body; the rhythmical stamping of the feet; and all the wild enthusiasm of the Negro camp meetings—these evidently cannot be transplanted to the boards of public performance.⁹

Recognizing these limitations, some Negro musicians are using the choral form, even when the Spirituals are sung on the stage.

The Spirituals are the product of an emotional background comparable only to that of the Jews when they produced the Psalms. They are the sad wail of a race crying from bondage, injustice and oppression:

Nobody knows the trouble I see,
Nobody knows but Jesus.

Yet they differ from the songs of Israel in one important respect; the Spirituals contain no prayer for vengeance. With pathetic faith the slaves clung to their religion for consolation. Just as Jehovah had delivered the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, just as He had saved Daniel from the lions, Jonah from the whale, and the three Hebrews from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar; so He would deliver them. The mood of the Spirituals is one of medieval ecstasy, with the souls of John Bunyan and John Wesley streaming "through a peasant mind and imagination."¹⁰ Like Job, the lowly slave can shout, "I know dat my redeemer lives." He can review the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and conclude,

⁹ *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Institute*, v.

¹⁰ Alain Locke, *The New Negro*, 204.

An' de God dat lived in Moses time
Is jus' de same today.

His eyes are ever turned toward the future life. There are hundreds of passages:

De udder worl' is not lak dis.

Jordan's stream is deep and wide
Jesus stan' on the other side.

This earth is not my place;
I seek my place in heaven.

His ideas of paradise are simple ones. It is the place where the angels dwell. It is the place where "Massa Jesus" lives (He is sometimes called "King Jesus") and where one can talk with "Father Abraham," "Brudder Jonah," "Fisherman Peter," "Sister Mary," and "good ol' Daniel." One can "see all de Postles," Peter will "ring dem bells," Gabriel will "blow his trumpet," and one can "hear sweet Jordan roll." One may "shout and sing" as much as he will. There are "alabaster gates" to be passed through and golden streets to walk on. There is milk and honey to "eat at de welcome table." There are starry crowns, white robes, silver slippers, golden girdles and palms of victory to wear. Thus accoutered, he will "walk all over God's heab'n." Heaven is a place of rest and peace:

When I git to heaven gwine to take my ease,
Me an' my God gwine to do as we please
Sittin' down side o' the Holy Lamb.¹¹

But heaven holds more exciting pastimes. There are "two big horses," "six white horses," and "twelve white horses."

Me and my Jesus am gwine to take a ride.

With such good things in prospect, death has no terrors for him; the grave no victory. Rather, it is the door of hope, the "sweet chariot" which will swing him over Jordan into the promised land. "Death is gwinter lay his cold icy hands on me," he cries, and there is real joy in his heart as he sings it.

¹¹ John A. Lomax, "Self-pity in Negro Folk Songs," *Nation*, Aug. 9, 1917, 105: 141-5.

Free at las', free at las',
 Thank God I'm free at las';
 Way down yonder in de graveyard walk,
 Me and my Jesus gwine ter meet and talk,
 Thank God I'm free at las'.
 On my knees when de light pass by,
 Tho't my soul would arise and fly,
 Thank God I'm free at las'.
 Some o' dese mornin's bright and fair,
 Gwine ter meet my Jesus in de middle of de air,
 Thank God I'm free at las'.¹²

But heaven appears to be an exclusive place, and "sinners" are rigidly barred:

Everybody talkin' 'bout heab'n ain't goin' there.

Gamblers, drunkards, liars, backbiters, and backsliders "can't a-ride on dis train." They are going to hell, and

The downward road is crowded with onbelievin' souls.

The true believer feels impelled to shout a warning as he flies away to heaven:

O sister, mind how you step on the cross!
 Your foot might slip and your soul git lost.

You say yer aimin' fer de skies,
 Why don't you quit yer tellin' lies?

There's Chloe Williams, she makes me mad,
 For you see I know she's going on bad;
 She told me a lie this afternoon,
 And the devil will get her very soon.

The Spirituals do not give us a very clear picture of hell, perhaps because the singer has never been there. We are told that it is a "dark and dismal place," and that it is approached by a path which is "fair and wide." But the singer isn't seriously interested in the place anyway. For him, there is "one more river to cross" and then there is no doubt in his mind that he will be saved.

¹² A. M. Chirgwin, "Vogue of the Negro Spirituals," *Edinburgh Review*, Jan., 1928, 247: 57-74.

I'm going to heaven to live with Jesus.
 Jesus washed my sins away.
 My soul is Canaan bound.
 De angels in heab'n gwinter write my name.
 My name is written in de book of life,
 If you look in de book you'll find it there.
 If you don't be'lieve I bin redeem,
 Jes follow me to Jordan stream.
 If you get there before I do,
 Jes tell 'em that I'm comin' too.

He can even afford to taunt poor Satan a bit,

Satan is mad and I am glad
 'Cause he lost a soul he thought he had.¹³

As he thinks over the situation he reaches the highest peak of ecstasy.

Who will be a-livin' when I am dead?
 Trees will be a-livin' and a-wavin'
 When I am dead.
 Birds will be a-livin' and a-singin'
 When I am dead.

On and on goes the song, stanza after stanza, until one senses the complete futility of human life. Mankind is less than the fowls of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes in the waters under the earth—for we die and the world goes on, teeming with life, in spite of us. Then come the last two lines of the poem.

Who will be a-livin' when I am dead?
 I will! I will!¹⁴

The song concludes with a triumphant shout.

These songs show a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. Indeed, if the Great Book were destroyed, much of its content could be reconstructed from the Spirituals. The Creation, Cain and Abel, Methusaleh, Noah and the flood, Jacob's wrestling match,

¹³ Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, 118. This and other passages from Mr. White's collection are quoted by permission of the Harvard University Press.

¹⁴ H. D. Norman, "Native Wood Notes," *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec., 1926, 138: 771-5.

the selling of Joseph, Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, the departure of the Israelites, the destruction of Pharaoh's army, the wanderings in the Wilderness, the burial of Moses, the fall of Jericho, Samson, Delilah and the Philistines, Eli and Samuel, David and Goliath, David's flight from Saul, Solomon and his glory, Elijah slaying the prophets of Baal, the chariot of fire, Jonah's mission to Nineveh and his subsequent adventure with the whale, Daniel's experiences with the lions, and the Hebrews in the fiery furnace can never be lost as long as the Spirituals endure. To be sure, the details are not always correct. Perhaps the death duel between Cain and Abel introduces an anachronism. At any rate we are told

Dat he hit him in de head wid de leg of a table.¹⁵

A modern note is certainly introduced in

Paul and Silas layin' in jail,
Lawd come down an' went deir bail.¹⁶

We are quite unprepared to learn that Pharaoh's daughter was "looking for roses" when she discovered Moses, but perhaps that is poetic license. One might not recognize Noah as "Nora" or Nicodemus as "Nigger Demus," and one can be pardoned a gasp of surprise to learn that the Ark landed on the "Allegainy Mountains!" But such errors are small matters when we consider the vivid and dramatic way in which Biblical scenes are frequently worked up. How could one construct a more complete and graphic picture than the following Spiritual entitled "Creation?"

Lord he thought he'd make a man,
Mixed a little bit o' dirt and san'.

Thought he make er 'oman too,
Didn't know zactly what to do.

He took a rib from Adam's side,
And made Miss Eve fo' to be his bride.

Put 'em in a garden rich and fair,
Tol' 'em to eat whatever was there.

Of this tree you must not eat,
If you do you'll have to skeet.

¹⁵ White, *op. cit.*, 86.

¹⁶ Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs*, 7. This and other passages from this collection are quoted by permission of the Harvard University Press.

Serpent wound aroun' the stump,
At Miss Eve his eye he wunk.

Lord he come wid monstrous voice,
Shook dis ole earth to its very joists.

"Adam, Adam, where art thou?"
"Here, Marse Lawd, I'm comin' right now."

"Et my apple I do believe."
"No, Marse Lawd, I spec' 'twas Eve."

"Out of this garden you must get,
Earn yo' livin' by yo' sweat."

Of this tale there is no more,
Eve et de apple, gave Adam de core.¹⁷

The story of the Exodus is told simply but effectively in another song entitled "Didn't Ole Pharaoh Git Los'":

De Lord said unto Moses—
"Go unto Pharaoh now,
For I have hardened Pharaoh's heart,
To me he will not bow."

Den Moses an' Aaron,
To Pharaoh did go,
"Thus says de God of Israel,
Let my people go."

Ol' Pharaoh said, "Who is de Lord
Dat I should him obey"? "
"His name it is Jehovah,
For he hears his people pray."

Hark! hear de children murmer,
Dey cry aloud for bread,
Down came de hidden manna,
De hungry soldiers fed.

Den Moses numbered Israel,
As dey stood along de Shore,
"Yo' enemies you see today,
You'll never see no more."

Den down came ragin' Pharaoh,
Dat you may plainly see,
Ol' Pharaoh an' his host
Got los' in de Red Sea.

¹⁷ White, *op. cit.*, 83-4.

The church militant is speaking in "Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho" when

de walls come tumblin' down.

In the same way the New Testament has been drawn upon for material by the Spiritual makers. It is rather amazing that there are few "Christmas hymns," although the crucifixion has been frequently worked up. One hears the nails being driven into the cross, the crown of thorns is placed, the cross is raised and pushed into place, the Savior's side is pierced, while the earth reels and totters amid flashes of lightning. The songs show familiarity, in a general way, with the miracles of Jesus:

Jesus make de blind to see,
Jesus make de cripple walk,
Jesus make de deaf to hear—
Walk in, kind Jesus,
No man can hinder me!

There is something pleasing in the discovery of the empty tomb:

Then she went to de sepulchre,
An' de Lord he wasn't da.
But she see a man a-comin',
An' she thought it was de gardiner.
But he say, "O touch me not,
For I am not yet ascended.
But tell to my disciples
Dat de Lord he is arisen."

It would be impossible to portray the missionary spirit of Christianity in a better way than the last stanza of "Balm in Gilead":

If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say, "He died for all."

The native Africans sing in chorus while pounding wheat or hoeing the ground. The overseers of the Southern plantations soon discovered that they could get more work out of their slaves if they sang while they picked cotton, their fingers keeping time to the music. Under such conditions the worker forgot that he was working and lost himself in the song. Whether he plows a furrow, paddles a canoe, or shines a shoe, the Negro does it in

rhythm. Every group has a "leader" who sings the solo parts, the group repeating the refrain over and over again at the end of each line. You hear them in the cotton field and on the sugar plantations, in the saw mills, and at the brick yards. Formerly there was a great deal of singing in the tobacco factories, but the Industrial Revolution has introduced noisy machinery with which not even the Negro can compete. The huckster drives down the streets of a city calling out in a shrill musical voice, "Cucumbers, ripe cucumbers, don't you want cucumbers?" and no matter how many times he may repeat it, the notes never vary. The writer has never heard sweeter music than the unintelligible yet melodious words which came from the throats of Negroes loading the river steamers in a Southern city. Other songs are wrung from construction crews, the levee workers, and even the chain gangs.

The song is usually one which is never written, and the "leader" would be unable to repeat it if he tried. The workers may sing it for an hour, adding verse after verse; or they may sing it all day. Religious material is sometimes used, but as any song which has rhythm may serve as a work song the subject matter of such songs is almost boundless. It is the rhythm and not the words which count, and since this is so the words are frequently unintelligible nonsense. Indeed, for the slaves to sing a song whose words had no meaning would show rare wisdom, for an unintelligible song might prove amusing to the overseer while a song revealing the thoughts of the singer might not be tolerated. Jerome Dowd cities the following slave song which he says was a common one on the steamboats:

I'm gwine to Alabamy, oh,
For to see my mammy, oh.

She went from ole Virginny,
And I'm her pickaninny.

She lives on the Tombigbee,
I wish I had her wid me.

Now I'm a good big nigger,
I reckon I won't git bigger.

But I'd like to see my mammy,
Who lives in Alabamy.¹⁸

¹⁸ Dowd, *The Negro in American Life*, 342.

and so on, *ad infinitum*. Or the gang might sing a couplet over and over:

Roll dat bale, roll dat cotton,
De Lord is good, your sins will be forgotten.¹⁹

Not many years ago the following song was sung by a railroad construction crew:

Birmingham, Alabam', Macon an' Yazoo,
Jacksonville, Tuscaloosa, Selma, Baton Rou'
Good-bye rail! Good-bye rail!
Good-bye rail—Ah'm goin' home.²⁰

As will be seen, the first two lines are nothing but the names of a group of cities, possibly those with which the singer was familiar; more probably any places that came into his mind. These two lines constituted the rest period of the crew. At the words "Good-bye rail!" the steel rail was grasped, slowly raised, and as the fourth line was completed lowered into place.

Many of the songs of the gang laborer deal with the "captain" or work boss whose chief interest is to keep his gang at work. He is not likely to sympathize with minor complaints and probably expresses himself profanely and forcibly:

Told the captain my han's wus col',
God damn yo' hands, let the wheelers roll!²¹

Although the "captain" is within earshot, the laborer is exceedingly frank in his criticism of him:

Oh, Captain Redman, he's mighty damn mean,
I think he come from New Orleans.²²

Indeed, many of the remarks made in the songs are intended for the "captain" to hear. Such are the protests of the laborer against the hard work:

Captain, Captain can't you see
This pick and shovel is killing me?²³

¹⁹ White, *op. cit.*, 295.

²⁰ *Atlantic Monthly*, Aug., 1930, 146: 281.

²¹ Odum & Johnson, *Workday Songs*, 252. This and other passages from this collection are quoted by permission of the North Carolina University Press.

²² *Ibid.*, 253.

²³ White, *op. cit.*, 258.

He does not hesitate to complain of the camp food:

Get up in mornin' when ding-dong rings,
Look at table—see same damn things.²⁴

Putting on a bolder face, he asks the "captain" for a chew of tobacco:

Hello, Captain,
How do you do?
If you got any Battle Axe,
Send me down a chew.²⁵

It is for the "captain's" ear that he is singing at the close of day when he musically wonders if it isn't quitting time:

Well, Captain, Captain, you mus' be blin';
Look at yo' watch! See ain't it quittin' time?²⁶

In still another mood, with the "captain" out of earshot, he sings:

Captain says hurry; I says take my time.²⁷

To judge from his songs, he does not seem to be greatly interested in his pay, although he sometimes hints that the "captain" "Won't pay off." One singer "hoped I get my full week's pay," but the usual attitude is

Pay day is Sat'day, then I drink my fill.²⁸

Restless being that he is, the worker's songs contain continual threats to quit his job. He may have a reason or he may not. It does not require any particular grievance to set him moving. He may just decide "to eat breakfast in a bran' new place."²⁹

Captain, Captain, give me my time
Tired of workin' in damned ole mine.³⁰

I ain't a gonna work a no mo'!
Done an' worked 'till my hands got sore.³¹

²⁴ Odum & Johnson, 253.

²⁵ White, 256.

²⁶ Odum & Johnson, 252.

²⁷ White, 255.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 308.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

Even the plantation hand is caught by the same wanderlust:

The times are hard and money is sca'ee;
 Soon as I sell my cotton and corn
 I am bound to leave this place.³²

The attitude of the Negro toward work is usually one of benevolent neutrality. Thus he sings:

I don't bother work and work don't bother me.
 I'm just as happy as a bumble bee.
 Eat when I can git it, sleep most all de time,
 I don't give a doggone if de sun don't never shine.³³

If he is out of a job, he is inclined to trust in the Lord:

De white man say de times is hahd,
 Nigger never worries, 'case he trust in de Lawd,
 No matter how hahd de times may be,
 Chickens never roost too high foh me.³⁴

If heavenly resources fail, all may yet be well providing he has a wife or sweetheart to fall back on:

I don't has to wuk so hard,
 For I got a gal in de white folk's yard,
 An' every night at half past eight
 I goes along the garden gate;
 An' she gives me buttah, and sugah, and lard,
 I don't has to wuk so hard.

But how sad is the plight of the singer who

Ain't got no shoes for de chillun,
 Can't find my wife no work.³⁵

Sooner or later the Negro laborer is sure to come to the subject of woman. His attitude toward her is often utilitarian. She is useful in bringing his food and in catering to his lusts. The subject of food is much in his mind. He is easily satisfied provided there is enough. It is of ordinary victuals that he oftenest sings: "Bile them cabbage down," "Peas in the pot, hoecake a bakin'," "Bake dem biscuits, bake 'em brown," and

³² White, *op. cit.*, 286.

³³ *Ibid.*, 294.

³⁴ Scarborough, *op. cit.*, 232.

³⁵ White, *op. cit.*, 364.

"O dem collard greens!" Very rarely do his songs show any genuine affection for the woman who shares his bed. Many of them are so filthy as to be unprintable, for of all peoples the Southern peasant is least troubled by restraint in expression. Not infrequently when his conjugal affairs do not go to his liking he gives the woman a beating.

If my wife don't treat me right,
I'll knock her teeth down her throat.³⁶

Scores of songs have fallen from the lips of chain gang prisoners. They sing while at work on the roads just as other Negroes sing at their work, their pick rising slowly with one line of the song and falling with the response. On Sunday, when the gang is idle, they pass the time in song. Any song which can be sung in construction work may be adapted to the uses of the chain gang, but there are a few which deal especially with their life and thoughts. One of these is the ballad "I Ain't Free."

De rabbit in de briar patch,
De squirrel in de tree,
Would love to go huntin',
But I ain't free,
But I ain't free,
But I ain't free,
Would love to go huntin'
But I ain't free, ain't free.

Dig in de road band,
Dig in de ditch,
Chain gang got me,
An' de boss got de switch,
I ain't free,
I ain't free,
I ain't free,
Chain gang got me,
An' I ain't free, ain't free.³⁷

Some of the songs tell of escapes from the gang and adventures with the dogs sent in pursuit. But for the most part the Negro prisoner is a philosophical soul who is fairly well satisfied.

³⁶ White, *op. cit.*, 329.

³⁷ Odum & Johnson, *Workaday Songs*, 72.

Cawn pone, fat meat,
All I gits to eat—
Better'n I has at home,
Better'n I has at home.

Cotton socks, striped clothes,
No Sunday glad rags at all—
Better'n I has at home,
Better'n I has at home.

Rings on my arms,
Bracelets on my feet—
Stronger'n I has at home,
Stronger'n I has at home.

Bunk for a bed,
Straw under my head—
Better'n I gits at home,
Better'n I gits at home.³⁸

Indeed, he sings:

I don't mind bein' in jail
If I didn't have to stay so long.³⁹

White injustice is a frequent theme in songs, although it is a remarkable fact that expressions of hatred or revenge are not found in any of the songs thus far collected. While he does a great deal of grumbling, in his heart there is a stoical acceptance of the things that are. What type of soul can sing in the face of the truth in these words?

White man go to college, nigger to de fiel';
White man learn to read and write, nigger axe to wiel'.
Well it makes no dif'rence how you make out yo' time,
White folks sho to bring de nigger out behin'.

Refrain:

Ain't it hahd, ain't it hahd,
Ain't it hahd to be a nigger, nigger, nigger
Ain't it hahd, ain't it hahd,
Caze you never git yo' money when its due.

If a nigger git arrested an' can't pay his fine,
Dey sen' him out to work on de county line.
Nigger an' white man playin' seben-up
Nigger win de money, 'fraid to pick it up.
He work all de week, he work all de time,
White folks sho to bring de nigger out behin'.

³⁸ Odum & Johnson, *op. cit.*, 85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

The miseries of the peasant farmer are forcibly expressed in a single stanza:

Las' year was a bad crop year,
Ev'body knowed it.
I didn't make but a bushel of corn
An' some damn rascal stole it.⁴⁰

Somewhat these unknown composers do not feel that things are just right:

Missus in de big house,
Mammy in de yard,
Missus holdin' her white hands,
Mammy workin' hard.

Niggers plant de cotton,
Niggers pick it out,
White man pockets money,
Nigger does without.

There is a description of the courts, too:

If a white man kills a nigger,
They hardly carry it to court,
If a nigger kills a white man,
They hang him like a goat.⁴¹

It is impossible to erase "Old Mammy" from any traditional picture of the feudal days, now long past. If the institution of slavery is ever justified, the fact that it produced these noble black women will do it. But "Mammy" vanished with the shackles which bound her people to the "Great House." Though Southern children are still lulled to sleep in the arms of the black nurse, there is hardly a Southern voice who will contend that the same bond of affection exists which once tied "Young Mas'r" to "Old Mammy." What lullabies did she croon over the cradles of her white charges? Most of them have disappeared with "Mammy" herself, and our culture is the poorer for the loss. "Short'nin' Bread" is really very old despite the fact that vaudeville and radio singers have only just discovered it. Probably thousands of white children have dropped off to sleep to the tune of its soothing yet choppy rhythm. There are also cradle songs which express

⁴⁰ Odum & Johnson, *op. cit.*, 123.

⁴¹ White, *op. cit.*, 382.

the love of the colored mother for her own child. How sad the song of the little child whom God forgot to make white; yet there is compensation in the thought that God still loves it "jes de same as if yo' was white."

A survey of Mr. Talley's collection reveals many nursery jingles which are favorites of white children, although we know them in a somewhat different form.

Deedle, deedle, dumplin'! My boy, Pete!
He went to bed wid his dirty feet.
Mammy laid a switch down on dat sheet!
Deedle, deedle, dumplin'! My boy Pete!^{41a}

Miss Scarborough has rescued a goodly number, of which the following is a fair sample:

I know somep'n I ain't going to tell;
Three little niggers in a peanut shell,
One can read and one can write
And one can smoke his father's pipe.⁴²

A new type of folk-song, expressing joy at the approach of freedom, developed among the Negro regiments in the Union armies during the Civil War. One such runs:

No more auction block for me;
No more peck of corn for me;
No more driver's lash for me;
No more pint of salt for me;
No more hundred lash for me;
No more mistress call for me;
Many thousand gone.⁴³

A whole group of new compositions came to light as a result of the participation of colored soldiers in the World War. Some of these have been collected and published by John J. Niles under the title *Singing Soldiers*.⁴⁴ Many of them are parodies of existing songs; a few are entirely original. One colored bard, known only as "Elmer," produced a real "blues" song describing his homesick feeling while crossing the ocean:

^{41a} T. W. Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes, Wise and Otherwise*, 171. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

⁴² Scarborough, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁴³ Cleveland G. Allen, "Negro's Contribution to American Music," *Current History*, May, 1927, 26: 245-9.

"Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1927. Several selections are quoted from this collection with permission of the author.

Oh, all day long I'se a-lookin' for trees.
 Lookin' for sand, lookin' for land,
 'Cause I'se got dose awful weepin', sleepin',
 Got dose awful sailin', wailin',
 Got dose awful deep-sea blues.⁴⁵

As one would expect, a good many of these songs deal with the work of the colored soldier "Over There." This bard seems to have been assigned to construction work:

Black man fights wid de shovel and de pick,
 He never gits no rest 'cause he never gits sick.⁴⁶

A second is engaged in still a different type of non-combat work:

Motor trucks and caissons cut a mighty trench,
 Have to pile de metal on fur dese damn poor French.⁴⁷

Perhaps a third stands a chance of going "Over the Top":

General Foch is a fine old French,
 He puts us niggers in a front line trench;
 The barb wire down, and the barrage begun,—
 Boche see a nigger and the Boche he run.⁴⁸

Contact with actual war disillusioned many soldiers. The colored soldier was no exception:

I'd rather be in the cottonfield
 Working hard,
 Than be a buck-private in the
 National Guard.⁴⁹

He certainly never will join the army again if he can help it.

Hope we're never goin' to have another goddam *gare*,
 'Cause if we duz, de drafters sho' will never find me there.⁵⁰

He wonders how matters have gone with his sweetheart in his absence.

⁴⁵ Niles, pp. 98-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁸ *Contemporary Verse*, Apr., 1919, 7: 51.

⁴⁹ White, *op. cit.*, 289.

⁵⁰ Niles, *op. cit.*, 168.

White folks says a slacker's done married off my skirt,
If this be so I sho' Lord will do somebody dirt.⁵¹

Then came the armistice. This is how he vizualizes it:

Uncle Sam he made and signed a degree
For American nation to ben' de knee.
God sits in Heaven an' answers prayer,
An' dey had to stop fightin' over there.⁵²

While faith in God is the dominant note in the Spirituals, the "blues" are filled with pessimism. They are such compositions as a Negro might be supposed to write when lonely or melancholy. To be sure, there are plenty of things which he might have to be "blue" about, but the theme around which most "blues" revolve is sex. Even the "bad man" is often pictured as bad because of a woman. When the "blues" singer gets into trouble with the law, he has a tendency to blame his downfall on a hapless *affair d'amour*.

Laid in jail with my face turned to the wall;
Dirty black gal she caused it all.⁵³

In despondency he cries,

I's goin' down to de rivah,
Jump in an' drown,
Dat brown gal baby
Done turn me down.

Goin' down to de drug sto',
Pisen I drink down,
Den dey take de news
To my baby brown.⁵⁴

Or perhaps it would be better to run away.

Some o' dese days,
Hit won't be long,
Mamma gonna call me
An' I be gone.

Some o' dese nights,
An' I don't kere,
Mammy gonna want me
An' I won't be here.

⁵¹ Niles, *op. cit.*, 168.

⁵² Odum & Johnson, *Workaday Songs*, 169-70.

⁵³ Odum & Johnson, *Workaday Songs*, 169-70.

⁵⁴ White, *op. cit.*, 275.

Some o' dese days
 In de by an' by,
 You won't have no'n't t' eat,
 Den you gonna cry.⁵⁵

The field hand is inclined to be boastful in singing of the qualities of his "gal," his "baby," his "honey," or his "brown."

If you want to see a pretty girl,
 Take a peep at mine, take a peep at mine.⁵⁶

Yet, if his songs express his real thoughts, his love would appear to be mostly of a sensual type; and he taunts her with the thought that he can be unfaithful.

I got a little black woman, honey, name is Mary Lou;
 Treats me better, honey, heap better'n you.⁵⁷

I got a woman an' sweetheart, too.
 Woman don't love me, sweetheart do.⁵⁸

Fortunately, he takes her lack of faithfulness for granted, regarding his "gal" as only a type of "gold digger."

My Jane's a gal gits all she can,
 If you ain't got it, she hunts another man.⁵⁹

If you give your gal everything she needs,
 You will spend the winter in your B.V.D.s.⁶⁰

From ashes to ashes
 And from dust to dust,
 I ain't seen a woman
 That a man could trust.⁶¹

Home again, home again,
 Crazy to git back,
 When I gets dere,
 Finds a stray man in my shack.⁶²

Many songs refer to the "creeper," an individual who takes advantage of a husband's absence to corrupt his home.

⁵⁵ Odum & Johnson, *Workaday Songs*, 137.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵⁷ Odum & Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, 160-1. This and other passages from this collection are quoted by permission of the North Carolina University Press.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Odum & Johnson, *Workaday Songs*, 144.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶¹ White, *op. cit.*, 322.

⁶² *Workaday Songs*, 150.

A serpent crawls on his belly,
 A cat wallers on his back;
 De meanest varmint in de worl'
 Is de creeper in my shack.⁶³

On the other hand, the woman frequently sings,

Dat nigger o' mine don't love me no mo'.⁶⁴

Usually some "other woman" is at the bottom of the trouble

'Twant for powder
 An' for store bought hair
 De man I love would not gone nowhere.⁶⁵

But it really doesn't matter, for she can be as fickle as he.

Diamon' Joe, you better come an' git me.
 Don't you see ma man done quit me?⁶⁶

If she tires of her new "man," she will probably beg to be taken back. The following is typical:

Things ain't same, babe, since I went 'way;
 Now I return, please let me stay.
 I'm sorry I lef' you in this worl' alone;
 I'm on my way, babe, I'm comin' home.⁶⁷

Another form of "blues" is what might be termed "tales of the lonesome road." They concern the "Poor ol' boy, long ways from home." Self-pity is often a strong element in the song.

Ain't got no friend nowhere Lawd,
 All by myself, no one to care.

Ain't got nobody to love me,
 Nowhere to lay my head.
 Dis po' man's life am a misery
 Lawd, how I wish I was dead.⁶⁸

I'm broke, babe, and I ain't got a dime.

⁶³ *Workaday Songs*, 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁶⁵ Maude Cuney Hare, *Negro Musicians and their Music*, 73. This and other passages from this collection are quoted by permission of the Associated Publishers.

⁶⁶ Odum & Johnson, *Negro and his Songs*, 184.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁶⁸ *Workaday Songs*, 36.

He seems to fear that he might die in this lonesome condition and in that event he leaves instructions to "ship my po' body home." Sometimes he is tempted to commit suicide. He feels like

Climb up to the mountain top,
Throw myself down in the sea.
Jes let the sharks and fishes
Make a big fuss over me.⁶⁹

Perhaps it might be better to lay his head on a railroad track. Then people might be sorry for the way in which they had mistreated him. But the mood soon changes and he finds that he doesn't want to die after all.

Well the grave-yard must be an awful place,
Lay a man on his back an' throw dirt in his face.⁷⁰

Still another group of present day songs are properly ballads dealing with the exploits of "bad men," Railroad Bill, Jesse James, Eddy Jones, Joe Turner, Dupree, Stagolee and others. Recklessness and braggadocio characterize these songs.

I was bohn in a mighty bad lan',
For my name is Bad-lan' Stone;
I want you all for to understan'
I'm a bad man wid my licker on.⁷¹

I'm a rowdy from over de hill,
I'm de rowdy called Roscoe Bill,
Roscoe Bill, Roscoe Bill,
When I shoots I'm boun' to kill.⁷²

In come a nigger named Slippery Jim,
None of de gals would dance wid him,
He rech in his pocket an' drew his thirty-two,
Dem niggers didn't run, good Gawd, dey flew.⁷³

The "bad man" is perfectly familiar with the process of getting arrested.

Standin' on de corner, wa'n't doin' no harm;
Up came a 'liceman, grabbed me by de arm.
Rang a little whistle, blew a little bell;
Here come de p'trol wagon, runnin' like—⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Hare, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁷⁰ White, *op. cit.*, 391.

⁷¹ Odum & Johnson, *The Negro and his Songs*, 163-4.

⁷² *Workaday Songs*, 62.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁴ Scarborough, *op. cit.*, 164.

The probability is that he will go to the chain gang; but he accepts fate cheerfully.

I got mine, boys, I got mine!
 Some o' them got six long months,
 Some o' them paid their fine,
 With balls and chains all 'round my legs,
 I got mine.⁷⁵

His philosophy is well expressed in the lines:

I got de blues, but I'm too damn mean to cry.⁷⁶
 Six months in jail ain't so long, baby.⁷⁷

At any rate, all "bad men" do not serve their whole sentences.

I'm 'hind de bars, but jes' fer a day,
 'Cause walkin' out de do' ain't de only way.
 I've got a saw, and I work like de devil,
 All t'ings in dis case am sho' on de level.⁷⁸

Another form of song shows his love of liquor and drugs. These, of course, are of recent origin since the Negro did not freely use whiskey and hardly cocaine at all in slavery times. The influence might be that of the college song book.

W'en I'se been dead, you needn' bury me at all.
 You mought pickle my bones in alkihall.⁷⁹

If der river wus whiskey an' I wus a duck,
 I'd dive to der bottom an' I'd never come up.⁸⁰

Whether in Africa or America, the chief characteristic of Negro music is rhythm. Primitive syncopation remains the keynote of the Negro dance. These Negro characteristics have had important influences in the production of such music as "rag-time" and "jazz" and such dances as the "tango," "turkey-trot," "Charleston," "Shimmy," "black bottom" and "lindy hop." "Ragtime," writes Dr. Brawley, "depends for its effect on the exaggeration of the rhythmical snap that is so prominent in Negro music, and upon an excessive use of syncopation."⁸¹ Indeed,

⁷⁵ *The Negro and his Songs*, 232.

⁷⁶ *Workaday Songs*, 18.

⁷⁷ Scarborough, *op. cit.*, 231.

⁷⁸ *Workaday Songs*, 87.

⁷⁹ *The Negro and his Songs*, 175.

⁸⁰ White, *op. cit.*, 275.

⁸¹ "Negroes in America," *Lit. Digest*, Dec. 20, 1919, 63: 40.

the first ragtime songs to be published were Negro folk songs of a secular nature which were taken over bodily by white men who affixed their own signatures as composers.

The earliest jazz-makers, according to Mr. J. A. Rogers, were itinerant piano-players who wandered from one saloon to another along the Mississippi, reproducing "by ear" the airs they had heard from deck hands and railroad construction crews. Modern jazz seems to have had its origin in the work of W. C. Handy, a Negro who had "digested the airs of the itinerant musicians" and evolved the first classic, *The Memphis Blues*⁸² (1912). The name "jazz" came, we are told, from "Jasbo" Brown, a musician in a Chicago cabaret who "when he was sober played orthodox music, but when he had imbibed freely of gin, which was his favorite pastime, had a way of screaming above the melody with a strange barbaric abandon."⁸³ At first exploited by Negro artists, Florence Mills, Ethel Waters, Abbie Mitchell, and the "Blues" sisters, Clara, Mamie and Bessie Smith, it was at the hands of white orchestras like those of Paul Whiteman and Vincent Lopez that jazz achieved most of its present popularity.

⁸² J. A. Rogers, "Jazz at home," Locke (ed.), *The New Negro*, 218.
⁸³ *Current Opinion*, Aug., 1919, 67: 97-9.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEGRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

Negroes singing their own compositions have been heard in the concert halls of many countries, but Negro literature is little known to the white world. So far as the records go, America's first Negro poet, Jupiter Hammon, was a slave who lived in Queen's Village, Long Island. Little is known of his life, and such of his work as has survived is incoherent in thought and crude in execution.¹

Phillis Wheatley, born in Africa and landed in Boston from a slave ship in 1761, is better known. At least four of her poems appeared in print before her first volume, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), was published. The book contains thirty-nine pieces. Seven later poems are known, and it is probable that she wrote others of which no copies are now extant. Many of her poems are elegies, others are written to celebrate important public events like the repeal of the Stamp Act. Some are poetic paraphrases of the Bible or Ovid, and still others are abstractions. Her style is a close imitation of Alexander Pope. Like Pope she achieves effect through the use of hyperbole. Like Pope there is an abundance of personification, and frequent allusions to Biblical heroes, pagan gods and classic Muses. Like Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley had a deeply religious temperament. She never set to work on any subject without arriving at the conclusion that God was taking a personal interest in human affairs. Thus "On Being Brought from Africa to America":

"Twas mercy brought me from my pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God—that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

.....
Remember, Christians, Negroes black as Cain
May be refined, and join th' angelic train.²

¹ Oscar Wegelin, *Jupiter Hammon*.

² *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, a Native African and a Slave*.

Apparently, the first Southern Negro to write poetry was George Moses Horton, a slave, whose master lived near Chapel Hill, North Carolina. According to tradition, the students at the university paid him to compose love verses at the rate of twenty-five cents a poem and fifty cents for lines which were unusually fervid. His first volume, *Hope of Liberty* (1929), was published by his friends with the thought of purchasing the author's freedom. The book contained twenty-one poems but, though it went through three editions, the returns were insufficient for the purpose. A second volume, which he laughingly called *Naked Genius*, was published in 1865. The thought in Horton's poems seldom rises above the commonplace, although he has an excellent ear for meter. Like Phillis Wheatley, his work shows the influence of Pope and also of the hymns of the period. There is more than a suspicion that Horton never desired more liberty than he actually had. He had no cause to complain of harsh treatment, but delighted to "play to the gallery" and he wrote a good many poems on freedom because slaves were supposed to wish to be free.³

But there were Negroes who did not subscribe to the doctrine that African slavery, coupled with the opportunity to embrace Christianity, was a blessing for the race. From 1829 until the war ended slavery, the printing press poured forth a steady stream of abolition literature, and much of it was written by Negroes. One of the most widely circulated works was the *Appeal* of David Walker (1829), so incendiary that even Benjamin Lundy condemned it as injurious to the cause of freedom.⁴ Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Highland Garnet, and James W. C. Pennington were all prominent as anti-slavery lecturers and writers. Next to Walker, Garnet was the most radical of Negro agitators. In *An Address—To the Slaves of the United States of America* (1848), he urged nothing less than a general strike.

Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die Freemen, than live to be Slaves. Remember that you are Three Millions.⁵

³ Collier S. Cobb, "An American Man of Letters," *Univ. of N. Carolina Mag.*, Oct., 1909.

⁴ Vernon Loggins, *The Negro Author*, 86.

⁵ Found in *A Memorial Discourse by Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, with an Introduction by James McCune Smith*, Philadelphia, 1865.

But Frederick Douglass was the most prolific as well as the most finished writer of the group. "In the oratory of Frederick Douglass, American Negro literature aside from its folk song has reached perhaps its highest plane."⁶ Prior to the war, no member of his race was better known as a lecturer and contributor to antislavery papers.

Antislavery ideas were sometimes coupled with colonization plans. For a long time there was much interest in the Liberian project, and this led to the publication of much controversial literature. Paul Cuffe, Daniel Coker and John B. Russwurm were won to the colonization plan. Cuffe published an account of Sierre Leone, Coker was sent to Africa to report by the Maryland Colonization Society, and Russwurm actually emigrated. As a rule the colonizationists were denounced by their fellow blacks in America, for African colonization was opposed by a number of able leaders.⁷ After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act (1850), many viewed colonization in a new light. Martin Delany wrote a number of works favoring the colonization of blacks in Central America, and later led an exploring party to Africa for the purpose of finding a possible place for colored emigrants in the Niger Valley. Henry Highland Garnet and Alexander Crummell were both converted to emigration, and Crummell spent the most productive years of his life in Liberia. Many of his sermons and lectures were written for the purpose of calling the attention of American Negroes to Liberia as an attractive home. Other sermons emphasize the idea that the Negro should not be ashamed of his color but should develop a pride of race.

Perhaps the most original products of the period are the so-called "slave narratives." Some were written by the fugitives themselves; others were written from "dictation." Since the narratives were a form of anti-slavery propaganda, being a fugitive had commercial possibilities. The best known is the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), subsequently rewritten and enlarged three times. The *Narrative* of William Wells Brown (1847) and the biographies of James W. C. Pennington and Samuel Ringgold Ward were also popular. The stories of Henry Bibb and Josiah Henson provided Mrs. Stowe with much of her material for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Other interesting narratives are

⁶ Loggins, *op. cit.*, 150.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 63, 76, 78-9; Carter G. Woodson, *The Mind of the Negro as reflected in his letters written during the Crisis*, 1800-1860, p. 3.

those of Sojourner Truth, Solomon Northrup, William and Ellen Craft and Linda Brent. Many of the narratives are crudely written, but in their appeal to human emotions their influence was far-reaching.

It is natural that the subject of freedom should be predominant in the Negro poetry of the period when abolitionists constituted the Negro's reading public. Mr. Arthur A. Schomburg's checklist⁸ contains eighteen titles falling within the antebellum period. The *Liberator* (May 18, 1841) contains a poem of more than usual promise from the pen of Daniel Alexander Payne, afterward bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. William Wells Brown published "Fling Out the Anti-Slavery Flag" in 1849. A few pieces from the pens of Charles L. Reason, Elymas Payson Rogers and George B. Vashon⁹ survive. James Whitfield and James Madison Bell each published a volume. But the best known poet of the antebellum period is Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper, whose *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* appeared in 1854 and was reprinted in a twentieth edition in 1871. The fact that she was an antislavery lecturer gave her an advantage for she was able to sell her poems to her audiences just as other Negro lecturers sold stories of their lives. It is said that ten thousand copies of her volume were thus disposed of. Naturally, slavery is her chief theme. In "Bury Me in a Free Land," she writes:

Make me a grave where'er you will,
In a lowly plain or a lofty hill;
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.

In writing of the Emancipation Proclamation, she says:

It shall flash through coming ages,
It shall light the distant years;
And eyes now dim with sorrow
Shall be brighter through their tears.

What is probably her best work is based on a biblical theme, *Moses, a Story of the Nile* (1869). There is charm in the description of the burial of Moses:

⁸ *A Bibliographical Checklist of American Negro Poetry*.

⁹ Loggins, *op. cit.*, 234-41.

And when the grave was finished,
 They trod with golden sandals
 Above the sacred spot,
 And the brightest, fairest flowers
 Sprang up beneath their tread.
 Nor broken turf, nor hillock,
 Did e'er reveal that grave,
 And truthful lips have never said,
 "We know where he is laid."

The first venture of the Negro into history is represented by R. B. Lewis's *Light and Truth* (1844). As might be expected, the history is faulty and has no interest from the standpoint of scholarship. Much different is William C. Nell's *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855), which was inspired by Whittier's regret that no attempt had been made to preserve a record of "the services and sufferings of the colored soldiers" in that great conflict.¹⁰ Nell's book is the result of a careful examination of source materials. After two mediocre attempts, William Wells Brown produced a readable general history of the Negro entitled *The Rising Sun* (1874). Joseph T. Wilson wrote a history of the emancipation movement and a study of the American Negro soldier. Both books were presently superseded by George W. Williams's two-volume *History of the Negro Race in America* (1883) and *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion* (1888). The first of these books was published by Putnam's; the second by Harper's. This was in itself significant, because never before had a reputable publisher deemed a work on Negro history, written by a Negro, to be of importance. In estimating Williams's services to literature, Dr. Loggins declares that only two of his predecessors, Alexander Crummell and Frederick Douglass, "stand out as possible greater writers of prose."¹¹ Dr. Washington's two-volume *Story of the Negro* (1902), although more widely read, is inferior to Williams's both as a literary and a historical composition. Other writers have been interested in the history of the Negro church. Probably the earliest venture of the sort was Christopher Rush's *Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (1843), written with "the aid of George Collins." Somewhat better are William T. Catto's account of the Presbyterian movement among Negroes of Philadelphia, and Wil-

¹⁰ *National Era*, July 22, 1847.

¹¹ Loggins, *op. cit.*, 278.

liam Douglass's history of St. Thomas Episcopal Church at Philadelphia. Possibly a dozen others discussed denominational history during the 1880's and 1890's. While most of these have little literary interest, they do show that the Negro is investigating himself. "Alexander Crummell's plea for Negro pride was being heard."¹²

The greatest intellectual achievement of any member of the race prior to 1900 was William E. Burghardt DuBois's monograph in the *Harvard Historical Studies* dealing with *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1896). In 1899, while a fellow in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. DuBois published *The Philadelphia Negro*. "It was as revolutionary in Negro sociological studies as *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* was in history."¹³ As professor of history and economics at Atlanta University (1896-1910), Dr. DuBois directed the researches of the *Atlanta University Studies* and has since made frequent investigations for the national government as well as contributed sociological studies to leading periodicals. Dr. DuBois "perhaps more than any one else (has) prepared the way for the intensive work which the Negro has done in recent years in studying scientifically the actual living conditions of his race."¹⁴

Biography has not been neglected. William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark* (1887) is a biographical dictionary of the leading members of the race. Both Charles W. Chesnutt (1899) and Booker T. Washington (1907) essayed the life of *Frederick Douglass*. That of Chesnutt is far outstanding. Archibald Grimke wrote *William Lloyd Garrison* (1891) and *Charles Sumner* (1892), and DuBois wrote *John Brown* (1909).

In the field of autobiography we have Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Seams* (1868), giving intimate glimpses of the White House during the Civil War, written by Mrs. Lincoln's modiste. Other memoirs of interest include Henry O. Flipper's *A Colored Cadet at West Point* (1878), Bishop Payne's *Recollections of Seventy Years* (1888), John M. Langston's *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol* (1894), and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901) which, says Dr. Loggins, "presents the most honest portrait which any American Negro had by 1900 drawn of his real self."¹⁵ We may well wonder how Dr.

¹² Loggins, *op. cit.*, 304.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 269.

Washington, absorbed in his work at Tuskegee and on the lecture platform, found time to write all that he did.¹⁶ As a rule his books show no logical development; wherever one reads one finds a pleasing style, a conciliatory attitude, a sense of humor, and intense sincerity. More recent autobiographies are DuBois's *Dusk at Dawn* (1940) and Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea* (1940).

In the field of oratory the Negro has made little advance since emancipation. Despite the importance of race questions involved in reconstruction, Frederick Douglass remained the unrivaled orator of his race. "And his successor has never arisen."¹⁷ This does not mean that there were no colored orators. During the reconstruction period the race was represented in Congress by such men as Robert Brown Elliott of South Carolina, Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi, and John M. Langston of Virginia. In the Atlanta Cotton Exposition address (1881), on receiving his honorary M.A. degree from Harvard (1896), and again at the unveiling of the Robert Gould Shaw Monument at Boston (1897), Dr. Washington emphasized the unity of interest of all men; that the welfare of the most cultured person in New England is bound up with that of the humblest black peasant in Alabama. In his extensive lecture tours his chief aims were to show that the hope of the Negro lay chiefly in industrial education and to gather funds for the support of Tuskegee. Although the best known and most popular Negro orator of his day, he does not in any sense compare with Douglass. Washington's talks were, like his writings, informal and pleasing but not soul-stirring. Nevertheless, he won his way into the hearts of thousands, black and white alike, and, probably more than any other man of his day, emphasized the gains made by his race.

Unfortunately, a difference of opinion developed over race objectives resulting in a feud between Washington's followers who emphasized industrial education and political *laissez faire* and the intellectuals who stood for equality. A considerable amount of controversial literature followed. Dr. DuBois undertook a campaign of propaganda marked by such classics as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), and *Darkwater* (1920). The race question was the theme

¹⁶ A partial list includes: *The Future of the American Negro*, *Education of the Negro*, *The Story of My Life and Work*, *Character Building*, *Story of the Negro*, *Working with Hands*, *Tuskegee and its People*, *Putting the Most into Life*, *The Negro in Business*, *My Larger Education*, and *The Man Farthest Down*.

¹⁷ Loggins, *op. cit.*, 290.

of many of Francis Grimke's published sermons, and of the papers of Dean Kelly Miller of Howard University. William S. Scarborough, president of Wilberforce University, in occasional magazine articles, also expressed views on education greatly at variance with those of Dr. Washington. But Scarborough's chief service to Negro literature is in the classical field. In 1881 he published a Greek grammar. This was followed by a treatise on *The Birds* of Aristophanes (1886) and a paper on "Negro Folklore and Dialect" in the *Arena* (Jan. 1897).

Of many poets after the Civil War, the most talented is Albery A. Whitman. Like Phillis Wheatley, he belongs to the "mocking bird" school. Phillis imitated Pope; Whitman imitated everything that he heard. His first long poem, *Not a Man, and Yet a Man* (1877), is written in a style which is a curious mixture of *Hiawatha*, *Snow-Bound*, *The Deserted Village*, *Paul Revere's Ride*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *Evangeline!* His best known work, *The Rape of Florida* (1884), based on the expulsion of the Seminoles, is written after the style of Byron. In "The Octoroons" the influence is that of Tennyson. "My Mountain Home" suggests Whittier, "Bells of Time" has in it much of Poe, "The Old Sac Village" is "Hiawatha," and "Custer's Last Ride" is another version of "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Yet in each instance the theme is so skillfully put together that the attention of the reader is drawn away from its model. The following sample is from "Bells of Time":

Ring! ring! ring! in thy dusty halls,
O Bells of Time,
Calling the morn of life,
Banging the noon of life,
Tolling the eve of life,
Ring! ring! O Bells of Time.

In "A Dream of Glory" occur the lines:

The fairest blooms are born of humble weeds,
That faint and perish in the pathless wood;
And out of bitter life grow noble deeds
To pass unnoticed in the multitude.

Certainly the thought and meter suggest Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, yet the words are not those of Gray.

In bulk as well as in quality, Paul Laurence Dunbar has produced the most impressive poetry of any American Negro.

From 1893 until his death Dunbar published six volumes of verse. Like Burns, to whom he has been compared, Dunbar is best known as a dialect poet. His lines are filled with 'possums and catfish, sweet "pertaters" and watermelons, with banjo picking, Melindy's singing, and with happy peasants courting at "The Old Front Gate" or making shadows on the wall "At Candle Lightin' Time." His emotions take us from the humor of "How Lucy Back Slid" to the pathos of "Two Little Boots." The outstanding fact concerning Dunbar's Negroes is that they are satisfied with their lot. Time has softened the memory of slavery, and he can look back upon plantation life with a happier impression than former poets possessed. Dunbar could write in classic English as well as in Negro dialect. "Ere Sleep comes down to soothe the Weary Eyes," "The Ode to Ethiopia," and the sonnets addressed to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington furnish ample proof. It has been said that Dunbar was the first Negro poet who did not depend on the Methodist hymn book for inspiration. He is not, like most of the poets who preceded him, a paragon of piety. He bids the priest think less of heaven and more of earth, and in "Philosophy" there is a note of pessimism:

But it's easy 'nough to titter when de stew is smokin' hot,
But it's mighty ha'd to giggle when dey's nuffin in de pot.¹⁸

Yet Dunbar's religion is not of the doubting quality. In "The Warrior's Prayer":

I do not ask that Thou shall front the fray,
And drive the warring foemen from my sight;
I only ask, O Lord, by night, by day,
Strength for the fight!

And in "A Hymn":

Lead gently, Lord, and slow,
For fear that I may fall;
And know not where I go
Unless I hear thy call.

Success gives rise to imitation, and Dunbar was followed by a school of Negro poets who wrote in dialect. Perhaps the most

¹⁸ This and the two following excerpts are quoted by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company.

successful were James D. Corrothers and J. Mord Allen whose humor is scarcely inferior to that of Dunbar.

For ten years after the death of Dunbar, the best known Negro poet was William Stanley Braithwaite of Boston. Braithwaite's poems have appeared in the best magazines as well as in separate volumes bearing his name. His poetry is modeled on that of Shelley and is entirely free from the color complex. But Braithwaite is best known as a student and literary critic rather than as a composer.

In the opening years of the twentieth century Harlem sprang up and considerable Negro colonies developed in Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington and elsewhere. With the growth of Negro business a group of cultured Negroes with leisure time came into being. For the first time the Negro had a public of his own race. It was possible for him to tell more of what he really thought and to express himself with more freedom. It was in 1913 that the "New Negro" movement began. Never before have so large a group of cultured Negroes devoted themselves to poetry. And some of them are not minor stars in the literary firmament. In such lovely lyrics as "The Heart of a Woman" and "I Want to Die while you Love Me," Georgia Douglass Johnson shows herself to be a soul who is rarely gifted. Countee Cullen has an excellent ear for music and can say beautiful things beautifully. He is not complete master of his art, but he is still young. The most cursory survey would convince one that Claude McKay has a gift beyond most of his racial contemporaries. He is a glorious revolutionist and one feels in his lines the heat of the burning furnace within him. In *God's Trombones*, a volume of Negro sermons in verse, James Weldon Johnson has achieved one of the best things thus far accomplished in Negro poetry. "The Creation" and "O Black and Unknown Bards" will bear comparison with the best poetry which America has produced. Concerning "Fifty Years" Brander Matthews says, "It is in uttering this cry for recognition, for sympathy, for understanding, and above all, for justice, that Mr. Johnson is most original and most powerful." Our record would be incomplete did we omit the names of Langston Hughes, Fenton Johnson, Joseph Seamon Cotter, Roscoe Jamison, Helene Johnson, Ann Spencer, Gwendolyn Bennett, Leslie Pinckney Hill, Lucian Watkins, Sterling Brown, and Margaret Walker.

Of humorous verse there is comparatively little. Most Negro poets of today take themselves seriously. To be sure, John Wes-

ley Holloway's "Discouraged" and "Calling the Doctor" have humor, and James Weldon Johnson's "Answer to Prayer" is sure to provoke a smile. But dialect poetry has largely ceased to be written. It is not popular with contemporary race artists. It reminds them too much of the colored minstrel offering his plantation songs for the white man's amusement. James Weldon Johnson objects that it has only two stops—humor and pathos. The work of Dunbar is eloquent proof of the fact. It is safe to say that three-fourths of present day Negro poetry is based on racial situations or aims to exploit folk materials.

No other poet has done so much to portray the common people of his race as Langston Hughes. His people are not the happy Negroes whom Dunbar knew, but the drab and hopeless dwellers of the city tenements, struggling in face of hard luck; sometimes cleaning "Brass Spittoons," often hungry and "Broke." The migrant, plodding along the dusty roads with all his possessions tied up in a bundle, the light brown girl dancing in a cabaret, the "big timer" on his "road to hell," Gin Mary standing before the judge without a friend, the "ruined girl" gazing hopelessly at the dark river, the pretty prostitute who gets higher pay than the honest girl in the white man's kitchen, the elevator boy with his hopeless outlook, the bastard black boy calling "I am your son, white man"—these are the types which stride through his stanzas. Any one of them might have uttered the line which Hughes put into the mouth of his own mother: "An' life for me ain't been no crystal stair." Hughes has borrowed from blues songs, from Spirituals and jazz, and mingled them all together, producing a "free verse" of his own. Is it poetry? The critics sometimes wonder.

The poetry of the "new Negro" is filled with a glorification of racial beauty and a boastful pride of race, such as one finds in Claude McKay's lyric to "The Harlem Dancer":

Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players on a picnic day,
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier through passing through a storm.¹⁹

¹⁹ This and the other poems of McKay are from *Harlem Shadows*, quoted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company.

We find it again in Gwendolyn Bennett's stanza:

I love you for your brownness
 And the rounded darkness of your breast;
 I love you for the breaking sadness of your voice
 And shadows where your wayward eye-lids rest.²⁰

There is a bitter, vindictive tone in much of the recent Negro poetry that augurs ill for both races. In the Dunbar era one could discern dissatisfaction at Nordic treatment, but it took the form of pleas rather than protest. It was full of pathos. Thus James D. Corrothers cries:

To be a Negro in a day like this—
 Alas! Lord God, what ill have we done?

The Negro poet wept copiously while the lynchers lynched merrily. The World War created a new Negro, one who, to use the words of Lucian Watkins, "thinks in black." Disillusionment resulted in challenge. Freedom and equality were dreams. In 1919 Claude McKay wrote "If We Must Die." It was a time when race riots flared up in northern cities and the lynching curve shot sharply upward. There is bitter defiance in his lines:

Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
 Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
 And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
 What though before us lies the open grave?
 Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
 Pressed to the wall, dying, but—fighting back!

Or consider the opening lines of "To America," penned by the same author:

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
 And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
 Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
 I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Countee Cullen²¹ is nearly as bitter. In *The Black Christ*, where he compares a lynching with the tragedy of Calvary, he pours out his passion, crying:

²⁰ Quoted by permission of the Associated Publishers.

Some man contemptuous of my race
 And its lost rights in this hard place,
 Will strike me down for being black.
 But when I answer I'll pay back
 The late revenge long overdue
 A thousand of my kind and hue.
 A thousand black men, long since gone
 Will guide my hand, stiffen the brawn,
 And speed one life-divesting blow
 Into some granite face of snow.
 And I may swing, but not before
 I send some pale ambassador
 Hot-footing it to hell to say
 A proud black man is on his way.²¹

There may be a grim prophecy in "From the Dark Tower":

We shall not always plant while others reap
 The golden increment of bursting fruit,
 Nor always countenance abject and mute
 That lesser men should hold their brothers cheap.²²

With bitter irony, Langston Hughes, in "The Colored Soldier," brings his dead brother back from France in a dream to congratulate him upon improved conditions now that "The world's been made safe for Democracy." Emphasizing discrimination in the Air Corps, in industry, and on the relief rolls, E. Olivia Nanton's "A Dark Man Speaks" concludes:

I think that I shall go to France
 And become a refugee;
 For no one in this country
 Gives a damn for men like me.^{22a}

Lastly, one finds in the "new Negro" poetry a deliberate return to the cultural background of Africa. It was Cullen who once said,

My chief problem has been that of reconciling a Christian upbringing with a pagan inclination.

In "Heritage" he poses the question "What is Africa to me?" and dramatizes the conflict between Christianity and the "pagan

²¹ This passage is quoted from *The Black Christ* by permission of Harper and Brothers.

²² This passage is quoted from *Copper Sun* by permission of Harper and Brothers.

^{22a} *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 353.

inclination," coming to the conclusion that conversion to a pale God "comes high-priced." McKay writes:

My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs . . .
I would go back to darkness and to peace
But the great western world holds me in fee
And I may never hope for full release
While to its alien gods I bend my knee.

Truly, we have traveled a long road since Phillis Wheatley!

William Wells Brown was probably the first colored man to attempt a novel. His *Clotel* (1853) is based on the rumor that President Jefferson had an illegitimate daughter who was sold as a slave in New Orleans. In a second edition (1864), the President's name was dropped and the heroine is made to appear the progeny of a Southern senator who is not named. The book is fiction, but that is about all that can be said for it.

Negro fiction in America properly begins with Charles Wad-dell Chesnutt. His first work of any importance was "The Goop-hered Grapevine" which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Aug. 1887). *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and *The Wife of His Youth* (1899), collections of short stories, were followed by a series of novels, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), *The Mar-row of Tradition* (1901), and *The Colonel's Dream* (1905). One might read *The Conjure Woman* without receiving any hint that the author was a Negro, but his other volumes have a pronounced racial bias. His chief aim is to show the results of miscegenation at the South, but in doing so he touches every phase of the race problem. *The Wife of His Youth* is written around the dilemma of a light colored man who, having escaped from slavery and grown wealthy in a Northern city, is compelled to choose between the wife he had married in slavery and an accomplished woman of his own caste and tastes. *The House Behind the Cedars* deals with the struggle of a light colored girl who hesitates whether she shall bestow herself on a white man who would make her his mistress, a brutal and vulgar mulatto, or a Negro who loves her with all the unselfish devotion of his simple soul. *The Marrow of Tradition* studies the relationships of two sisters, one black, the other white, daughters of the same father; while *The Colonel's Dream* describes the futile struggle of a dreamer who attempts to reform a Southern town under the handicap of race hatred. "The Boquet," one of his short stories, shows how the color line

is drawn even in death when a little colored girl is not allowed to attend the funeral of a white teacher whom she loves. "The Sheriff's Children" is a tale of a sheriff who saves a prisoner from a lynching mob, only to find that it is his own mulatto son.

Contemporary with Chesnutt, Dunbar produced a number of volumes of short stories and novels. They proved disappointing to his friends and critics are in agreement that they added nothing to his fame. Most of them deal with white people. *Sport of the Gods* (1902), concerning the unjust conviction of a colored man and the ruin of his family in New York City, is the best of the group. But the situations with which it is packed would have been better handled had they been spread over half a dozen novels.

Perhaps one reason why there was so little Negro fiction prior to the World War was that the Negro felt nothing which needed expressing. He knew that he was Jim Crowed, but he was used to that and dreamed not of changing the situation. But out of a war which was to make the world safe for democracy, he expected a new order. He knew what democracy meant. It connoted equality of opportunity, an equal right to share in the good things of life with his blonder countrymen. When the war ended and the whites attempted to thrust him back into his old position of inferiority, the Negro was disappointed. Now there was something in his soul which needed release.

Surveying such materials as we have, it would appear that there are four really good Negro novelists who belong to the post-Chesnutt era: Rudolph Fisher, Claude McKay, Walter White, and Richard Wright. The first two wrote of life among the lowly in the Lenox Avenue neighborhood. And they discovered that the lives of truckmen and piano movers can have a fascinating interest. Fisher's *Walls of Jericho* (1928) was followed by *The Conjure Man Dies* (1932), a dark mystery tale, with a colored detective to solve the crime. The untimely death of the author cut short what promised to be a brilliant literary career. Claude McKay has given us four works in prose. In all of them we find frankness and artistry, naturalness and abandon. They are vivid pictures of what the Negro thinks, told in language which is restricted only by the lowest standards of censorship. His first novel, *Home to Harlem*, deals in realism, sordid but beautiful. Like Fisher's work, it teems with the uncultured types and degraded aspects of Harlem life. The chief figure is a colored soldier who, returning from France, meets a light-brown girl in a cabaret. In the

morning he loses her and searches in all the recesses of Harlem night life until he finds her again. One critic writes, "As folk lore the book is valuable; as fiction it seems to me quite without form or meaning."^{22b} *Home to Harlem* was followed by *Banjo* (1929), a "story without a plot." This time the scene is laid along the docks at Marseilles, and we see the riffraff of the world thrown up in the slum areas along the waterfront. *Gingertown* (1932) is a collection of short stories dealing with Harlem and the West Indies. In his fourth novel, *Banana Bottom* (1933), McKay has returned to his own Jamaica for local color. His heroine, Bita Plant, is a native brown girl of Banana Bottom. Adopted by missionaries, she is sent to England to be educated. Years later, a cultivated young woman, she returns to Jamaica, torn by conflict between English life and customs and the pull of her black ancestry. There is no question that McKay stands in the front rank of the "Negro renaissance." Of Walter White's two novels, *The Fire in the Flint* (1924) is better. It is a propaganda novel, recounting all the evils which Negroes suffer in the South. *Flight* (1926) chronicles the thoughts and actions of a woman so light that she can "pass." *Rope and Fagot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929) is the most vivid treatment of lynching that has so far appeared in America. Richard Wright is one of the present-day masters of the short story. A collection entitled *Uncle Tom's Children* was published by *Harper's* in 1938. This was followed by *Native Son*, one of the best selling novels of 1940. *Native Son* is a novel of frustration—the dramatic picture of a mal-adjusted Negro youth in a white dominated world.

Jessie Fauset has published four novels: *There is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1928), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931) and *Comedy: American Style* (1933). With a touch of enthusiasm, Braithwaite speaks of her as "the potential Jane Austen of Negro literature."²³ "In each there is a woman of color whose racial identity might be in doubt and who struggles in the toils of fate."²⁴ Formerly literary editor of *The Crisis*, Miss Fauset wrote *There is Confusion* under the influence of DuBois, and there are many touches which remind one of *The Souls of Black Folk* and *Darkwater*. *Plum Bun* is melodramatic and unreal, and the characters are not convincing. Yet V. C. Calverton thinks it

^{22b} Mark Van Doren, *Nation*, March 28, 1928, 126:351.

²³ *Opportunity*, Jan., 1934, 12: 24-8.

²⁴ *The Negro Genius*, 222.

"marks an advance over her earlier novel."²⁵ To this Dr. Alain Locke is inclined to agree, declaring it "a far more mature rendering of life, both in style and substance."²⁶ *Comedy: American Style* is ironically named, for it really is a tragedy of the deepest sort. It centers around a woman who, for selfish motives, insists on "passing." The result of her selfishness ruins her husband, forces her daughter into a loveless marriage, and causes her son to commit suicide. "No one of these books is a great novel, and one might especially find fault with the earlier productions. . . . There are also, however, some strong situations, and much of tenderness and beauty."²⁷

Langston Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (1930) tells of the life of a colored boy in a small Kansas town. It is a better portrayal of life than is found in most Negro novels. *The Ways of White Folks* (1934) is a collection of short stories about the relations of colored and white people described from the colored point of view. The pages are filled with pathos, humor and terror, and the satire leaves hardly any phase of white insincerity unexposed. *One Way to Heaven* (1932), by Countee Cullen, is a tale of Harlem in the popular vein. The sketches in Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) and Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death* (1926) are well done and, together, give a good picture of a transplanted race in various parts of the New World, the scene of the former being laid in the Southern states; of the latter in the West Indies and South America. *Tropic Death* attracted a good deal of attention at the time it was published. Its half-tamed jungles, color-struck seas, peasant villages and teeming cities filled with white, black and yellow men struggling with heat, thirst, desire, horror and death present a picture which the reader will long remember. It is unfortunate that Mr. Walrond has not continued to develop his undoubted talent. Other novels which deserve mention are Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* and *Infants of the Spring*; Nella Larsen's *Passing* and *Quicksand*; Zora Neale Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, *Mules and Men*, *Moses: Man of the Mountain*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Arna Bontemps's *God Sends Sunday*, *Black Thunder*, *Sad Faced Boy* and *Drums at Dusk*; Waters E. Turpin's *These Low Grounds* and *O, Canaan!*; William Attaway's *Let Me Breathe Thunder* and *Blood on the*

²⁵ New York *Herald-Tribune*, May 26, 1929.

²⁶ *Survey*, June 1, 1929, 62: 325.

²⁷ Brawley, *op. cit.*, 224.

Forge; Mercedes Gilbert's *Aunt Sara's Wooden God*; and John M. Lee's *Counter-Clockwise*.

The modern Negro novel shrieks with realism—stark and awful. The stream is somewhat muddy. There is an undue emphasis on the sordid. While DuBois's *Dark Princess*, Jessie Fauset's *There is Confusion*, and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* deal with upper-class Negroes, the bulk of the present-day Negro novelists have gone to the lower strata for their characters. The principal character in *God Sends Sunday* is Augie, a colored jockey. The story deals with his gambling companions, his women friends (prostitutes), his drunken orgies, and his final defeat. In many respects, Augie is a true picture of the Negro of the lower class. There is no need to put money in the bank. Today means everything; tomorrow may never come. In *The Blacker the Berry* we get a picture of the happy Negroes of Harlem who live from hand to mouth, pawning their clothes to pay the rent. They have little regard for conventions. Marriage is no necessary preliminary to motherhood, and remarriage is consummated without the "red tape" of getting a divorce. Bigger Thomas, the hero of *Native Son*, is an ignorant bully, a sneak thief bred in the slum jungles of American "civilization," a "bad nigger," the "native son" of Chicago's black ghetto. Fondness for vagabonds, roustabouts and street walkers, and the tendency to exploit illicit sex relations and 'jungle moods' moves Dr. Brawley to protest: "If we read of one coarse and ignorant Negro, then of another, and another and another, it is by a very simple induction that we conclude that all Negroes are coarse and ignorant."²⁸

What are the motifs which one finds in the modern Negro novel? Since it is based on life, one would expect to find a delineation of the evil of color prejudice on the part of whites. One is not disappointed. In one case color causes a brilliant girl to lose a scholarship. One sees a college professor who takes it for granted that a colored boy cannot pass his course. Jimboy was a good bricklayer. But he didn't have a union card—and couldn't get one. A porter's job or a ditch-digger's outlook was the best he could hope for.²⁹ As a matter of course, the difficulty of obtaining justice in the courts is treated,³⁰ and in *Dark Princess*

²⁸ "Art is not enough," *Southern Workman*, Dec., 1932, 61: 489-94.

²⁹ *Dark Princess*, 11; *Plum Bun*, 43, 348; *Passing*, 69; *Not without Laughter*, 33; *Home to Harlem*, 48.

³⁰ *Fire in the Flint*.

DuBois describes a case where an innocent colored man was lynched.³¹ But one may be surprised to find that Negroes themselves exhibit prejudice, even toward their own kind. In *Flight* there are colored churches attended only by quadroons. Laurantine Strange, the light-colored dressmaker of *The Chinaberry Tree*, has a shop which caters to white trade. She refuses to take the work of the wife of a Negro physician on the ground that some of her customers might object. "I can't afford to trifle with my living." Nowhere is the tragedy of prejudice thrown into higher relief than in Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry*. Emma Lou Morgan is the daughter of light-colored parents. But for some reason known only to the gods Emma Lou possessed a dark skin. The neighbor's children refused to play with her because she was black. Her own parents treated her little better than an outsider. Emma Lou felt no joy on receiving her high school diploma. "What she needed was an efficient bleaching agent." In college she found the same discrimination. Negro students refused to associate with her; she was too black. After three years she went to New York City, attempting to secure a position with Negro business men. They wanted light-colored girls. Ultimately she was successful in finding a job as maid in a white family.

Discrimination causes many Negroes who are light enough to "pass" to seek happiness "across the line." Mimi's aunt points out many such persons who, as a consequence of their "passing" have good jobs in banks and exclusive shops.³² Several Negro novelists have dealt with this problem, and most of them are in agreement that the Negro who "passes" is doing a despicable thing. Neither the Mimi of *Flight*, nor Angela of *Plum Bun*, nor Clare of *Passing* found happiness in their new surroundings. Wallace Thurman alone feels that Negroes who can "pass" will be so glad to do so that they will "probably join the K.K.K. to uphold white supremacy."³³

Practically all the novelists condemn "social equality" which might lead to intermarriage. In *Blacker the Berry* we find that white and black gamblers shoot dice together, white and black men meet in the saloon, the dance hall or "Whore Row," but there is no commingling of races in the higher strata of life. Langston Hughes's novel notes that whites and blacks mingle

³¹ pp. 74-6.

³² *Flight*, 199-210.

³³ *Infants of the Spring*, 262.

only in the "bottoms." Racial intermarriage is viewed with disapproval, partly because social pressure would probably make such a marriage a failure,³⁴ partly because it brought only trouble for the children, as Helga Crane knew only too well.³⁵

Many of the novels aim to stimulate race pride. Jessie Fauset is one of the foremost exponents of this idea. She never loses an opportunity to impress on her readers the things which her race has achieved. The white teacher in *There is Confusion* regards Joanna as the most brilliant student in her class. It goes without saying that Joanna is not a white child. Bita, the Negro girl of *Banana Bottom*, takes pride in being herself; and though she has been educated in England, she still feels that she belongs to the black peasants of the Bottom.

The Negro novelist has no sympathy for those Negroes who try to behave like whites. Getting an education in order to be like white folks is held up to scorn in *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*. Langston Hughes's Tempe is successfully married. She seldom sees her own people because her mother still makes a living at the wash tub and her sisters in domestic service. She likes the Episcopal service because there is "never anything niggerish" about it.³⁶

In their treatment of whites the Negro novelists are anything but gentle. There is a spirit of cynicism whenever a white man comes into the pages. Whites are regarded as untrustworthy and immoral. In *Flight*, the white man of the household where Mimi works makes indecent proposals to her. In the *Dark Princess* DuBois writes, "brown women seem strangely attractive to white men, especially Americans; and this is the open season for them."³⁷ Rudolph Fisher's Miss Camp is sincere enough. She is a white woman with money who is interested in "uplifting" Negroes. She would like to increase the number of trained Negro servants, but she has no idea that anybody would "want a colored secretary."³⁸ Even the philanthropic Mr. Dalton of *Native Son* is the owner of the rickety kitchenette flats which produce such exorbitant financial returns that human wastage doesn't count.

According to the best standards the technique of contemporary Negro novels is poor, although they do not suffer too much

³⁴ *Plum Bun*, 265, 324.

³⁵ *Quicksand*, 172.

³⁶ *Not without Laughter*, 165.

³⁷ Page 17.

³⁸ *Walls of Jericho*, 136-7.

when compared with the second-rate novels which our presses turn off by the ton every year. As Dr. Weatherford says, one of the chief difficulties is that "they are lacking in power of sustained plot and often become a series of episodes strung on a rather precarious thread of story."³⁹ Another defect is inherent in the purpose for which they are written. The Negro novelist does not set out to entertain. He is writing a treatise in sociology. He is bitter, often sarcastic. Art and propaganda do not go together. Most critics agree that the Negro is not at his best in novel-writing.

Save for Angelina Grimke's *Rachel* (1921), nothing of value has been achieved in the written drama until the past few years. Garland Anderson's *Appearances*, Langston Hughes's *Mulatto* and Richard Wright's *Native Son* have had runs on Broadway, and Eulalie Spence's *The Fool's Errand* was a popular vehicle of the Krigwa Players. Willis Richardson has been more prolific in this field than any other writer of plays, and two of his collections have recently been published by the Associated Publishers.⁴⁰ The list is not outstanding, but it augurs well for the future.

Among contemporary historians one must mention A. A. Taylor, Charles H. Wesley and Carter G. Woodson. All are careful and painstaking students of history and masters of research. Dr. Woodson has probably done more than any single person to rescue Negro history from oblivion. Long the editor of the *Journal of Negro History*, he has still found time to write perhaps a dozen separate monographs. Mr. Braithwaite has given us *The Story of the Great War* (1919), Emmett J. Scott has written *The American Negro in the Great War* (1919) and *Negro Migration During the War* (1920), and Dr. DuBois has given us *Black Reconstruction* (1935). The last is an account of the period following the Civil War told from the point of view of the black men who played so prominent a part in it. Dr. Charles S. Johnson is one of the most competent contemporary sociologists whose published works probably number half a dozen volumes. Dr. Abram L. Harris is one of the most brilliant Negro economists of the day. He is co-author of *The Black Worker* (1931) and author of *The Negro as Capitalist* (1936) as well as a number of valuable magazine articles. Sociological monographs of importance have

³⁹ Weatherford & Johnson, *Race Relations*, 483.

⁴⁰ *Plays and Pageants from the Life of the Negro*, 1930; *Negro History in Thirteen Plays*, 1935.

been written by George Edmund Haynes, Sadie Tanner Mossell, and Charles Lionel Franklin. James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1913) is a significant work, and his *Black Manhattan* (1930) was awarded the William E. Burghardt DuBois Prize in 1933 as the "outstanding work of prose non-fiction written by a Negro during the period 1930 to 1932 inclusive." *Along this Way* (1933) is autobiographical, giving an account of a busy life as author, editor, teacher and diplomat. Col. Robert Russa Moton, Dr. Washington's successor at Tuskegee, has published two books of importance, *Finding a Way Out* and *What the Negro Thinks*. Their tone is far from servile, yet they are lacking in the vigor which one finds in the Negro literature more closely identified with the race at the North. Dipping his pen in acid, George S. Schuyler has published a number of essays. Alain Locke is important as an editor rather than an original contributor. It was he who collected much of the post-war work of Negro writers in *The New Negro* (1925). This was followed by *Plays of Negro Life* (1927), *Four Negro Poets* (1927), *A Decade of Negro Self-Expression* (1928), *The Negro and His Music* (1936), and *Negro Art: Past and Present* (1936).

The recent forward movement in Negro literature marks the beginning of a new epoch in the literary history of a people. We do not know how much of what we have enumerated will be of permanent value. It was not until three centuries after the Norman Conquest that England's first great poet appeared; the Negro has scarcely been that long out of Africa. Certainly never before have so many Negro writers with genuine talent appeared in so short a time. If, only seventy-five years removed from slavery, the Negro race can produce a Dunbar, a Chesnutt, a McCay, a Cullen, a Wright and a James Weldon Johnson, that is itself remarkable.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEGRO AND CREATIVE ART

The form of Negro creative art that first powerfully appealed to the American public was minstrelsy. Doubtless Dr. James Weldon Johnson is correct in turning to the slaves of the Old South for the first Negro minstrels.

Every plantation had its talented band that could crack Negro jokes, and sing and dance to the accompaniment of the banjo and bones—the bones being the actual ribs of a sheep or some other small animal. . . . When the wealthy plantation owner wished to entertain and amuse his guests, he needed only to call for his troupe of black minstrels.¹

The dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which "Topsy's" clowning antics played so important a part, accustomed the public to the idea that the Negro was a buffoon. This paved the way for popular minstrel companies. Even before the war there were a number of such companies in which the characters were white men with painted faces. The first successful all-Negro company was the Georgia Minstrels, organized by Charles Hicks in 1865. A few years later the troupe was taken over by Charles Callender. For many years it toured the country under the name Callender's Original Georgia Minstrels, passing under the ownership of Charles Frohman in 1882.² Other popular minstrel troupes included Sam Jack's Creole Show which opened in Chicago in 1891, played there throughout the World's Fair, and then ran five or six seasons in New York.³ The performance was written around a chorus of sixteen good looking colored girls and a number of clever comedians, chief of whom was Sam Lucas. Then came *The Octoroons* (1895) and *Oriental America* (1896). All these shows were alike in one respect. In every instance the comedians were of the Rufus and Rastus type—grotesque caricatures of the race they represented. Thus a tradition was created which was

¹ James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 87.

² *Ibid.*, 90-2; George C. Grant, "The Negro in Dramatic Art," *Journal of Negro History*, Jan., 1932, 17: 19-29.

³ Johnson, 95.

current for a long time, and to some extent still survives in Amos and Andy. The average theater-goer knew the Negro as an irresponsible, happy-go-lucky, wide-grinning creature who laughed loudly, rolled his eyes, danced, played the banjo, sang Stephen Foster's songs, and kept his audience in hysterical laughter through a liberal use of slap-stick comedy. The public had difficulty in comprehending that a Negro could go beyond this point.

The world had apparently forgotten Ira Aldridge, an American-born Negro who once made his way to London and learned the art of acting from Edmund Keane. In 1826 Aldridge appeared in London as "Othello" and later played the role to Kean's "Iago." In the '40s and '50s he toured Europe in a Shakespearean repertoire. The rulers of Austria, Russia, Prussia and Sweden vied with each other in bestowing high honors upon this Negro whom they recognized as one of the greatest tragedians of his day.⁴ But Aldridge had no immediate successors. The minstrel tradition was too strong.

Bert Williams will always be known as one of America's greatest comedians. In 1896 he and George Walker were engaged to appear in *The Gold Bug*. Although the play was unsuccessful on Broadway, the team proved to be popular. They were humorous without being merely silly. Assisted by two girls they made the cake-walk fashionable. Year after year they appeared in new shows: *Senegambian Carnival* (1899), *The Policy Players* (1900), *The Sons of Ham* (1901), *Dahomey* (1902), *Abyssinia* (1906), and *Bandana Land* (1907). At this time Walker's health broke, and in 1909 Williams was playing alone in *Mr. Lode of Kole* (Load of Coal). In 1910 Florenz Ziegfeld offered him a contract under which he appeared in the *Follies* for ten years. He was now a featured comedian in white musical shows, his last being *Under the Bamboo Tree* (1922). Those who knew Bert Williams say that he had ambitions for more serious drama, but he realized that the blight of color would probably bar him from the legitimate stage. Though he had more white blood than black, Bert Williams was a Negro; and since he was a Negro the public demanded that he be a comedian. The hopelessness of the situation saddened him and his death was but the end of a tragedy. W. C. Fields spoke truly when he said of Williams, "he was the

⁴ Fountain Peyton, "A Glance at the Life of Ira F. Aldridge," *Opportunity*, Mar., 1925, 3: 88-90; Olive Morris, "The Negro in the American Theater," *Players Mag.*, Jan.-Feb., 1929; Benjamin G. Brawley, *The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States*, 98.

funniest man I ever saw and the saddest man I ever knew."⁵

Bob Cole and J. Rosamond Johnson, the exponents of light musical comedy, were contemporaries of Williams and Walker. The first all-Negro musical comedy was Cole's *A Trip to Coontown* (1898-9). In 1901 he and Johnson formed a partnership for the purpose of writing and acting musical plays, Cole composing the words and Johnson the music of the songs. Among their "hits" were *The Shoo Fly Regiment* (1906) and *Red Moon* (1908), the last starring Sam Lucas. *The Smart Set* (1901), *Rufus Rastus* (1905), *The Oyster Man* (1907), *Shuffle Along* (1921), *Chocolate Dandies* (1924), *From Dixie to Broadway* (1924), *Blackbirds* (1926) and *Africana* (1927), musical comedies of various authorship, made such stars as Sissle and Blake, Miller and Lyles, Ernest Hogan, Florence Mills, and Ethel Waters famous. Song writers like James Bland, Ernest Hogan, and Al Johns wrote popular "hits" like "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginia," "Oh Dem Golden Slippers," "All Coons Look Alike to Me," and "Go Way Back and Sit Down." Yet all these shows carried on the minstrel tradition. Their importance lies in the fact that they gave talented Negroes an opportunity for dramatic expression.

In the meantime Worth's Museum at Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, and later the Lafayette and Lincoln Theaters in Harlem, became the homes of Negro stock companies. Many Negro actors gained their experience as members of the Lafayette Players. Their repertoire consisted, in the main, of Broadway successes. In the Negro colleges a few ambitious souls dreamed of things more worthy than songs and comedy burlesquing Negro life for the white man's entertainment. Teachers of English at Howard, Atlanta, Hampton, Tuskegee and elsewhere experimented with amateur productions, not only of classic plays, but also, when they could find them, of sketches attempting a sincere portrayal of Negro life and character.

Three one-act plays were written by Ridgely Torrence, a New York playwright, to meet the needs of such groups. *Granny Maumee* featured an old negress cherishing a bitter hatred toward the whites who had burnt her son at the stake. She boasted of the "royal black" in her blood. "All us wimens hones', all de way down, an' we kep' clear er de white streak." The climax came when her daughter returns with a mulatto child. The men-

⁵ Jessie Fauset, "The Gift of Laughter," Locke (ed.), *The New Negro*, 163-4.

tal shock causes the old woman to revert to the jungle and perform a vivid scene of voodoo enchantment. The other plays were called *Rider of Dreams*, a play of rustic Negro life; and *Simon the Cyrenian*, a story of the black man who was Jesus's cross-bearer. It was an important day in the history of Negro dramatic art when Mrs. Norman Hapgood presented these plays (1917) at the Garden Theater, New York City, with a cast of talented Negro players.⁶ It was the first demonstration to the general public that the Negro actor could perform in other than burlesque parts.

In 1923 Raymond O'Neill organized the Ethiopian Art Theater in Chicago with a capable group of Negro actors. Following successful presentation there, O'Neill launched his company on Broadway. The selection of plays was unfortunate. Only Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* dealt with Negro life. The comments of the critics were not favorable and the ambitious attempt ended in failure.⁷

Perhaps the most successful of all such companies was the Krigwa Players who had the distinction of winning a place in the Little Theater Tournament (1927) to compete for the David Belasco trophy. Although unsuccessful in their competition for the trophy, their play, *The Fool's Errand* by Eulalie Spence, was awarded one of Samuel French's prizes for the best manuscript plays. Other "little theater" groups include two companies in Boston and others in Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Dallas, Tougaloo (Miss.), and elsewhere.

From the "little theater" to Broadway is a story which occupies the next few years. Such a transfer of activity would have been impossible but for the preparation given Negro actors in the various "little theaters" and stock companies. It would have been equally impossible had not important playwrights turned to Negro life for themes. One of the most prominent was Eugene O'Neill. He first experimented with Negro materials in *The Dreamy Kid*, a one-act play concerning the trapping of a Negro criminal as he visits his dying grandmother. This play

⁶ The same group of plays was presented by another Negro company in 1922. Julia Cline, "Rise of the American Stage Negro," *Drama*, Jan., 1931, 21: 9-10; Brawley, *op. cit.*, 99-100; *Current Opinion*, May, 1917, 62: 328-9; May, 1922, 72: 639-40.

⁷ Robert Littell, "The Negro Players," *New Republic*, May 30, 1923, 35: 21.

was produced by the Provincetown Players at New York City (Oct. 1919) and has been a favorite with a number of "little theater" groups. Next came *The Emperor Jones*, produced at New York in 1920. The leading character is a Pullman porter and escaped convict who has made himself dictator on a West India island "not yet self-determined by white marines." A revolution occurs. The Emperor is forced to fly, and as he plunges through the jungle episodes of his past flash through his mind. Tormented, he finally kills himself with a sliver bullet, dying, as he had lived, in a grand manner. *All God's Chillun Got Wings* had its premiere at the Provincetown Playhouse in May 1924. It is based on an interracial marriage which ends in disaster because the traits in nature would permit no happiness in union. The importance of O'Neill's work lies in the fact that the Negro was at last appearing as a human being instead of a caricatured stereotype.

Two years later David Belasco produced *Lulu Belle* with a cast of over sixty persons, more than three-fourths of whom were colored. Evelyn Preer had an important role. Paul Green's one-act play, *The No 'Count Boy*, has been produced in a number of "little theater" groups. In the autumn of 1926 the Provincetown Players presented his great masterpiece, *In Abraham's Bosom*. If *Emperor Jones* is a drama of panic and fear, *In Abraham's Bosom* is a tragedy of frustration. The action centers about the struggles of Abraham McCrannie, a mulatto, whose soul is filled with some strange ambition to awaken his people from their slumbering ignorance. The conflict of his two natures results in disaster. His school is broken up. The son, to whom he desired to pass on the torch of leadership, becomes a wastrel. His wife, who drudges that he may dream, is old and broken before her time. Abraham is defeated. He cannot keep a job in town, nor can he make the farm pay. But his soul is never broken, even when his body is finally riddled by a lynching party. Rose McClendon as "Goldie" gave one of the most satisfying performances of her brief but dazzling career. Jules Bledsoe, later replaced by Frank Wilson, made a very satisfactory Abraham. Mrs. McClendon and Frank Wilson also had important parts in *Porgy* (1927-8). *Porgy* and *Harlem* (1929) were plays dealing with the lower strata of Negro life. With few exceptions, the casts in both plays were colored. Several Negroes, including Jules Bledsoe, had speaking parts in Edna Ferber's *Show Boat* (1927-8), and a great many were used in the chorus.

Perhaps the greatest of all plays exploiting Negro material was Marc Connelly's *The Green Pastures* (1929). The play is a presentation of the familiar stories of the Old Testament interpreted through the mind of an unsophisticated Negro preacher. Heaven is represented as one long holiday of fish fries. The "Lord" resembles a colored preacher who tries to run the universe from his little office in Heaven. Like man, he struggles and suffers, hoping against hope that something worth while may come out of the creatures He has made. Broadway managers are not easily shocked, but the idea of God walking on the stage appalled them. Yet under the reverent handling of Richard Harrison the vast audiences who saw the play made no charge that it was blasphemy. *In Abraham's Bosom* and *The Green Pastures* were Pulitzer Prize Plays.

These plays introduced to Broadway a group of Negro actors who did not suffer by comparison with the best of their white contemporaries. Among them were Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, Richard Harrison, Rose McClendon, Jules Bledsoe, Frank Wilson, Evelyn Preer, Eugene Corbie, Opal Cooper, Sidney Kirkpatrick, Laura Bowman, Inez Clough, Daniel Haynes, Wesley Hill, Abbie Mitchell and Tutt Whitney. Three of them call for more extended treatment.

Charles Sidney Gilpin toiled in the theater for many years before he achieved ultimate fame. We find him with Williams and Walker in *Abyssinia*, with Gus Hill's *Smart Set*, and with a stock company in Chicago before he undertook the management of the Lafayette Theater in 1916. Three years later he played the part of Mr. Custis in John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*. This was his first appearance on Broadway. In 1920 Gilpin had the title role in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. And Gilpin suddenly became famous. Broadway discovered that a Negro could play tragedy. Writing in the *New York Tribune*, Heywood Broun said,

He sustains the succession of scenes in monologue not only because his voice is one of a gorgeous natural quality, but because he knows just what to do with it. All the notes are there and he has also an extraordinary facility for being in the right place at the right time.

For his work in *The Emperor Jones* Gilpin was awarded the Spingarn Medal; and the Drama League voted him one of ten persons who had done most for the American theater during the year. In 1926 Gilpin lost his voice and was compelled to retire from the stage. He died May 6, 1930.

When one speaks of Paul Robeson it is necessary to use superlatives. Few white boys have made Phi Beta Kappa in their junior year at college, at the same time participating in every major form of athletics. Paul Robeson not only did that at Rutgers; he was a member of Walter Camp's all-American football team for two years. Moreover, he was one of the greatest debaters who ever won a place on the Rutgers team. Graduating with honors, he took a course at the Columbia University Law School and was offered a fine position with an old and established law firm. He declined it to go on the stage. There is pathos in the manner in which he announced his decision: "In law I could never reach the peak; I could never be a supreme court judge; on the stage there is only the sky to hold me back." *Taboo* (1922), a play dealing with an African background, is important only because Paul Robeson made his first appearance on the professional stage in it. He succeeded Gilpin in the role of *The Emperor Jones*. In 1924 he put to test an ancient taboo. He played the principal role in *All God's Chillun Got Wings* opposite a white woman. George Jean Nathan described him at the time as "one of the most eloquent, impressive and convincing actors I have seen in twenty years of playgoing." He played the part of "Crown" in Heyward's *Porgy*, and took the foremost Negro part in *Show Boat*. Robeson's reputation was now international. He starred in the London production of *Show Boat*, played the title role in a revival of *The Emperor Jones* in Berlin (1930), and came back to London to play *Othello* to Peggy Ashcroft's "Desdemona." This was one of the most talked-of performances on the eastern side of the Atlantic. English critics thumbed through forty years of newspaper files without finding a parallel to the score of encores which greeted Robeson in his London debut.

Robeson, who long ago charmed London with his singing of Old Man River and his raging as *The Emperor Jones*, did more than act the Moor. He constructed a new Othello, depicting the tragedy of the Negro race.⁸

Mr. Robeson's ebon Othello is as sturdy as an oak, deep-rooted in its elemental passion and many branched in its early tenderness, a superb giant of the woods for the great hurricane of tragedy to whisper through, then rage upon, then break. One thinks of a tree because the greatness is of nature, not of art.⁹

⁸ "Negro Actors on the Stage," *Outlook*, June 4, 1930, 155: 175; Elizabeth S. Sergeant, "The Man with His Home in a Rock: Paul Robeson," *New Republic*, Mar. 3, 1926, 46: 40-4; *Nation*, June 4, 1924, 118:664.

⁹ Maude Cuney Hare, *Negro Musicians and their Music*, 373, quoting Ivor Brown in London *Observer*.

Robeson's London performance of *The Hairy Ape* (May 1931) was warmly applauded but the illness of the star made it necessary to withdraw the play after five performances.

Richard B. Harrison, who played "the Lord" in *Green Pastures*, was a remarkable bit of casting. One brief moment in the second scene would be sufficient to ruin the play under less able hands. We are attending a fish-fry in heaven when Gabriel utters his great line, "Gangway for the Lord God Jehovah!" If the audience had laughed when the frock-coated black-faced Jehovah made his entrance the play would have been ridiculous. But the audience did not laugh. "On Broadway I went to see a show, and I saw God," remarked Dr. Edward A. Steiner,¹⁰ while Richard Watts, Jr., dramatic critic of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, called *The Green Pastures* "one of the loftiest achievements of the American Theater."¹¹ In presenting the Spingarn Medal for 1930, Lieutenant-governor Lehman uttered the following tribute to the great actor:

Through your art you have brought happiness and understanding and sympathy to thousands of your fellow citizens. . . . You have served your art, you have served your people, and you have served the community of which we are all equal partners.¹²

Although the theater-going public did not know Mr. Harrison prior to his engagement in *The Green Pastures*, it must not be imagined that he was new to theater work. As a matter of fact, he began acting in Canada in 1889, had been a dramatic reader for thirty years and a teacher of dramatic art at the North Carolina College for Negroes since 1921.

No one who has seen Gilpin, Robeson, or Harrison can fail to realize that intelligent and trained Negro actors, given the opportunity, are capable of serious dramatic interpretation. Yet, because of an unfortunate tradition, it is only during the past decade and a half that a few Negroes have been able to win their rightful place in the theater. It is fortunate for art that Mr. Harrison had the opportunity to play "Jehovah"; yet how much the theater lost in delaying the opportunity until he was sixty-five years of age!

The economic depression wrought havoc with the legitimate stage. It goes without saying that Negro actors were harder hit

¹⁰ Benjamin G. Brawley, *The Negro Genius*, 291.

¹¹ Hare, *op. cit.*, 172.

¹² *New York Times*, Mar. 23, 1931, 24: 2.

than those of other races. When Negroes have no money for food, it is impossible to attend plays. One by one their stock companies and little theaters were dissolved. Dramatic artists became clerks in stores if, indeed, it were possible to find a job. It was in November 1935 that the Federal Theater Project came to the rescue and made it possible for Negro actors to continue their work under government subsidy. In all there were nine Negro projects in the country, the most important of which were in New York and Chicago. The New York project presented a dramatic version of Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, two plays by Frank Wilson, *Brother Mose* and *Walk Together Children*, William DuBois's *Haiti*, and Hall Johnson's *Run Little Chillun*. From Chicago came *Did Adam Sin?*, *Every Man in His Humor*, *Romy and July* (a burlesque of Romeo and Juliet), *Mississippi Rainbow*, *Big White Fog*, and *Swing Mikado*. The triumph of *Swing Mikado* stimulated new interest in Negro musicals, especially the *Hot Mikado*, featuring the dazzling dance steps of Bill Robinson, *Swinging the Dream*, a swing version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Hot Modern Swing Pinafore*. *The Cabin in the Sky* and *Mamba's Daughters* offered Ethel Waters opportunities for spectacular roles, and *Native Son* did as much for Canada Lee. The Little Theater groups continue to do good work, perhaps the best being the Charles Gilpin Players of Cleveland, the Rose McClendon Players and the Harlem Suitcase Players of New York, and the Howard University Players. Despite handicaps, the show goes on.

Of course, the first Negro film had to be *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1915), with Sam Lucas in the role of Uncle Tom. But the same unfortunate tradition has barred Negroes from all except a very minor place in moving pictures. They have been used in a few travel films. Individual pictures like David Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* or Lon Chaney's *West of Zanzibar* used considerable numbers for "atmosphere"—mobs, levee, plantation, and African jungle scenes. A few Negro actors have received steady employment. Noble Johnson found opportunities for playing Mexican bandits and other parts calling for a swarthy skin. Others have been chosen for comedy parts. What child has not laughed at Sunshine Sammy and Farina of Hal Roach's "Our Gang Comedies"? A few others have edged their way into the films in spite of discouragements and handicaps. When Oscar Smith first went to the Paramount Studios in 1920, he was a servant of Wallace

Reid. He has played small parts in perhaps two hundred pictures. For many years Stephen Fetchit, one of the stars in Will Rogers's *Judge Priest*, was a porter on the Fox lots. Carolyn Snowden, who played opposite Fetchit in *In Old Kentucky*, had a long apprenticeship as lady's maid.¹³

The coming of the "talkies" was the Negro's opportunity. The first talking pictures were primarily of a musical comedy variety, and song and dance could be used to advantage. The Negro excelled in both. While *Hearts in Dixie* was an entertaining picture of plantation life, it is the plantation songs which hold the chief interest. The same is true of Universal's *Show Boat* which used a good many Negroes in the singing parts. In Christie's *Melancholy Dane* much depends on the comic dialogue.

Perhaps the best known colored face in the movies is that of Hattie McDaniel, who usually plays a lady's maid or "mammy" type. It was for her work as the loyal and devoted servant in *Gone With the Wind* that Miss McDaniel won the Academy Award as the best actress in a supporting role in 1939: the first Negro performer to win the coveted Oscar. Other Negroes who, despite the difficulties, are making their way in pictures are Louise Beavers, Leigh Whipper, Lena Horne and Eddie Anderson, perhaps better known as "Rochester" on Jack Benny's program. The Hall Johnson Singers have furnished music for a number of important pictures like *Lost Horizon* and *Green Pastures*.

So far Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's *Hallelujah* has proved to be the most important all-Negro "talkie." The cast assembled by King Vidor was exceedingly capable. Daniel Haynes, formerly of *Show Boat*, had the title role, supported by Nina May McKenny of *Blackbirds of 1929*, Fanny DeKnight who played in *Lulu Belle*, and Victoria Spivey, a "blues" recording artist. Three hundred and seventy-five "extras," recruited from the plantations of the Cotton Belt and the colored cabarets of Los Angeles, furnished the "atmosphere," while the songs were directed by Eva Jessye, director of the Dixie Jubilee Choir. With such a background, Richard Watts, Jr., might well speak of *Hallelujah* in the New York *Herald-Tribune* as "one of the most distinguished and exciting moving pictures ever made."¹⁴

In the meantime, Negroes have not waited for white initiative

¹³ Geraldine Desmond, "The Negro Actor and the American Movies," *Close-up*, 1929, 5: 90.

¹⁴ "Primitive Emotions Glance in a Negro Film," *Literary Digest*, Oct. 5, 1929, 103: 42-56.

but have organized several companies of their own for the production of "race" pictures. Both Gilpin and Robeson have starred in such productions, perhaps the most important pictures being Robeson's *The Emperor Jones* and *Jericho*.

Outside of folk song, the Negro's contribution to music is less than one might expect. The *Negro Year Book* gives a list of a dozen or so Negro song composers, but none of them occupy a high rank. Probably J. Rosamond Johnson and Will Marion Cook are the outstanding writers of popular songs, just as Harry T. Burleigh, R. Nathaniel Dett, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, William L. Dawson, and William Grant Still are prominent among composers of a semi-classical type. Burleigh has played a prominent part in the adaptation of Negro melodies for choral work. He assisted Dvorak in arranging the Negro folk songs used in the latter's *New World Symphony*, and he has composed the music for many songs and instrumental pieces. For these achievements he was awarded the Spingarn Medal in 1917. Dawson's *First Symphony* was performed by Stokowski and his Philadelphia Orchestra in 1934.

Many Negroes have sung well, and it is perhaps natural that the Negro singer should have attracted more attention than the Negro composer. It is an accepted fact that even untrained Negro voices have an appealing quality. In the early '50s, Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, "the Black Swan," was a prominent figure on the concert stage. It was not infrequent for reviewers to make comparisons between her voice and that of Jenny Lind, then at the height of her fame. Twenty-five years later the Ayer sisters were outstanding vocalists. Then came Madame Selika, Flora Batson, Mrs. Sissieretta Jones (Black Patti), and more recently Mme. Anita Patti Brown, Mme. Mayme Calloway Byron, and Marian Anderson. Among the men, Roland Hayes is an outstanding tenor, Harry T. Burleigh and Jules Bledsoe probably rank foremost as baritones, and Paul Robeson as a bass-baritone. Hayes and Robeson are best known by reason of their frequent appearances on concert platforms, both in America and Europe. Naturally, the greatest interest lies in their rendition of the Spirituals, although both usually include groups of French, Italian, and German songs in their programs. For many years Mr. Burleigh has been soloist at St. George's Episcopal Church and the Temple Emanu-El in New York City. Bledsoe is perhaps better known as an actor, famous as the "Old Man River" of *Show*

Boat; but he has sung difficult roles in operas like *Aida*, both in America and England. J. Rosamond Johnson and Taylor Gordon may be mentioned as popular singers of Spirituals. Marian Anderson has been rated as the world's greatest contralto, and Dorothy Maynor as a soprano of more than usual ability. Bessie and Clara Smith are known to vaudeville, phonograph, and radio audiences as singers of "blues." Artists like the Southernaires are popular radio groups.

In instrumental music the race has produced several men of genius. Perhaps the most celebrated was Thomas Bethune, born a slave near Columbus, Georgia, in 1849. Although blind, Tom had a remarkable ear for music and could immediately reproduce on the piano any piece he heard. For many years he toured the concert stage both in the United States and abroad. Edmund T. Jackson of Charleston, South Carolina, was trained at the Royal Academy in London where he won several medals for excellence in piano and clarinet as well as for original work in composition. Carl Diton, organist and pianist, has so far been chiefly interested in transcription for the organ of representative Negro melodies.

A few Negro artists have made their mark; in some instances quite substantially. In painting, Henry Owassa Tanner has won recognition after twenty years of painful effort. His work has won medals at the Paris Exposition (1900), Pan-American Exposition (1901), St. Louis Exposition (1904), San Francisco Exposition (1915), and other awards at the Paris Salon and exhibitions at the Chicago Art Institute. Two of his pictures were purchased by the French government to represent the United States in the Luxembourg Collection; others are in the Chicago Art Institute and other important galleries, and two hang in the Library at Hampton. William Edouard Scott is a younger artist who did his earlier work under Tanner's influence. One of his paintings was purchased by the Republic of Argentine. But Scott is better known for his mural paintings in public buildings in Chicago, Indianapolis, and elsewhere. Aaron Douglas's murals are found in various public buildings, notably in the Fisk University Library. The best work of Albert A. Smith has been in etchings. He has completed a series of portraits of famous Negroes, including Frederick Douglass, Paul Laurence Dunbar,

Booker T. Washington, Toussaint Louverture and Aleksandr Pushkin.¹⁵

In sculpture three women have attained recognition. Miss Edmonia Lewis attracted attention in 1865 through her bust of Robert Gould Shaw. Other busts which she has produced include John Brown, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, William Story, Robert Browning, Longfellow, and Lincoln. It is known that the Story and Sumner busts were posed for, and the latter is probably the best example of her work. Meta Vaux Warrick (Mrs. Fuller) is best known as a sculptor of the horrible. Her later work centers around racial themes and is more optimistic. "Ethiopia Awakening," in the Harlem Library at New York, is typical. It shows "a semi-Egyptian female emerging from a casing of swathing bands like an awakening mummy." She modeled the Negro group of figures at the Jamestown Exposition (1907). Much of her early work was destroyed by fire in 1910. Miss Augusta Savage was selected by the New York World's Fair Board to design a group symbolic of the contribution of the Negro race to music.¹⁶ Sargent Johnson sculptured the figures around the fountain in the Court of Pacificia at the Golden Gate International Exposition (1939). Richmond Barthe was the winner of the second prize in sculpture at the American Negro Exposition (1940). He has been commissioned to execute the work for the James Weldon Johnson Memorial.

The names mentioned in these pages by no means exhaust the list. Since 1928 the Harmon Foundation has given annual exhibitions of Negro art in New York. Over two hundred and twenty-five artists have participated since the series started. Other promising exhibitions of Negro art have been held in Chicago. Much of the work of these artists deals with the portrayal of folk types or primitive African sculpture or decoration.

Compared with the Anglo-Saxon, the Negro's creative work is small in quantity, and perhaps not highly original. Yet when we consider how short the time he has been permitted for artistic development and the handicaps under which he has worked, his achievements hold great promise for the future.

¹⁵ Alain Leroy Locke, *Negro Art—Past and Present*, 30.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1937, 28: 6.

CHAPTER XIX

IN DEFENSE OF THE FLAG

Negroes have served in every war in which this country has been engaged. Three or four thousand Negroes fought on the American side in the War for Independence. George Washington said they made good soldiers. They fought with Perry on Lake Erie and with Jackson at New Orleans. Quantities of black regiments fought in the Civil War. Black troops acquitted themselves creditably at Las Sussinas and El Caney. At San Juan Hill Negro cavalry regiments saved the Rough Riders from being flanked and cut to pieces.

In the First World War, 400,000 Negro soldiers were drafted. From the moment they arrived in training camps, these Negroes had to contend with Jim Crowism. They were discriminated against in such privileges as leave and entertainment. Often they were given discarded uniforms. For the most part they were deprived of colored leadership. After repeated conferences, Joel Spingarn, chairman of the board of directors of the N.A.A.C.P., secured the establishment of a training camp at Des Moines, Iowa, to prepare Negro soldiers for commissions. Notwithstanding the army record of Charles Young,¹ then lieutenant colonel in the Regular Army of the United States, an entire corps of white officers was appointed to train the colored cadets. Ultimately 625 first and second lieutenants and half a dozen captains were commissioned. These officers were allowed to command only Negro troops.

The Negro officer posed a difficult problem. White enlisted men continually refused to salute Negro officers, and some white officers declined to compel them to do so. The government of the United States did not undertake to protect its uniform when worn by Negro officers. The United States government took over the railroads and operated them during the war. Jim Crow was always a passenger. When Lieutenant Charles A. Tribett, while attending to official duties under order, was arrested and taken from a Pullman car in

¹ Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, graduate of West Point (class of 1889), had accompanied Gen. Pershing into Mexico and received high commendation from the man who later became commander of the A.E.F. He was only forty-nine years old and seemingly in good health, although the Medical Board retired him for high blood pressure.

Oklahoma, the government did nothing to protect him.² Negro officers were discriminated against on transports. On the *George Washington*, the tickets of colored officers were marked with "X" in the left-hand corner; the tickets of white officers were not marked. The former were given second-class passage; the latter were assigned to first-class passage.³

Throughout the South there was objection to teaching Negroes to use firearms. The problem was overcome by the creation of labor battalions. Three-fourths of all Negroes called into service became longshoremen, ditch diggers, road builders and wood cutters. Of the 200,000 who were sent to France, only 42,000 reached the firing line. The rest drilled with pick and shovel. Nevertheless, the Negro soldiers fought well. General Pershing wrote,

I cannot commend too highly the spirit shown among the colored combat troops, who exhibit fine capacity for quick training and eagerness for the most dangerous work.⁴

The 93d Division fought with the French troops until the Armistice, and the French were high in their praise of the fighting qualities of *les enfants perdus* (the lost children), as they called them because they were separated from the rest of the A.E.F. In the 8th Illinois, 30 officers and 38 non-commissioned officers and privates (all Negroes) were awarded the *Croix de Guerre*. The 15th New York Infantry lost 1,100 killed and wounded, and received 172 decorations. It spent 191 consecutive days in action (longer than any other American outfit), and was able to boast that it had never lost a foot of ground or surrendered a prisoner to the enemy.⁵ The Battle of Henry Johnson, when a one-time red cap from Albany fell in with a party of 24 Germans in a No-Man's-Land outpost, has been compared to the feat of Sergeant York. He killed four with bullets, rifle butt and a bolo knife, and probably killed a fifth with hand grenades. The others were driven off.⁶ The 92d Division was offered to the British. If the British had accepted the loan, the A.E.F. would not have contained a single colored soldier.

Between 1918 and 1940 the morale of the Negro soldier in the American Army fell to low ebb. Out of a total strength of about 230,000 officers and enlisted men, less than 5,000 were Negroes.

² Walter Wilson, "Old Jim Crow in Uniform," *Crisis*, Mar., 1939, 71.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *School and Society*, Dec. 7, 1940, 52:580.

⁵ Beulah Amidon, "Negroes and Defense," *Survey Graphic*, June, 1941, 30:320-6; *Time*, Aug. 12, 1940, 36:15-16; *Opportunity*, Feb., 1941, 35.

⁶ *Time*, Mar. 2, 1942, 39:13; *Life*, June 15, 1942, 12:83-90.

Negro officer personnel included one colonel,⁷ two lieutenant colonels (one overage, the other overweight for active service), and a second lieutenant⁸ newly graduated from West Point. There were also three Negro chaplains in the Regular Army. The only Negro units in the United States Army with full combat status were the 24th and 25th Infantry and the 9th and 10th Cavalry, all officered by white men. The 24th Infantry, stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, was being utilized as truck drivers, cooks and similar tasks. The 25th Infantry was in camp at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The 9th Cavalry was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. The 10th Cavalry was split between West Point, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Fort Myer, Virginia. Its members were employed chiefly as grooms for officers and cadets. In 1939 three Negro Quartermaster regiments, the 31st, 47th and 48th, were organized in the form of truck companies for motor transport service. The 349th Field Artillery, two Coast Artillery units, the 76th and 77th Anti-aircraft battalions, 41st Engineers, and 1st Chemical Warfare Company were added. There were also three National Guard units. The old 8th Illinois had become the 184th Field Artillery. The 15th New York Infantry had been transformed into the 369th Coast Artillery, anti-aircraft. The 372d Infantry consisted of battalions scattered in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Ohio, and a single company in the District of Columbia.

At that time Negroes might not serve in the Air Corps, the Tank Corps, the Signal Corps, or the Marine Corps. Testifying before a committee of the House of Representatives, Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, declared,

⁷ Col. Benjamin O. Davis has a long record for army service. During the Spanish-American War he served as company officer at Fort Thomas, Kentucky, and Camp George H. Thomas, Georgia. Upon being mustered out, he enlisted as a private in the 9th Cavalry and qualified for a commission as second lieutenant a year and a half later. He served with the 10th Cavalry in Samar and Panay, Philippine Islands, during the insurrection of 1901-2. Later he served as Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Wilberforce University and Tuskegee Institute, and was with the Mexican Border Patrol in 1912-15. During the First World War he served overseas with the 9th Cavalry, being promoted to captain, major and lieutenant colonel. On his return to the United States (1920), he served a five-year tour as instructor of the National Guard, and later was placed in command of the 369th New York National Guard, now the 369th Coast Artillery Anti-aircraft. In the history of the country, only two Negroes, Col. Charles Young and Col. Davis, have reached the rank of colonel. Until Col. Davis's recent promotion to brigadier general, no Negro officer had held a higher rank.

⁸ Lieut. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., son of Col. Benjamin O. Davis. He graduated from West Point in 1940, ranking 35th in a class of 276. He was transferred to Tuskegee Institute, where he earned his "wings" as commanding officer of the 99th Pursuit Squadron. In all, five Negroes have graduated from West Point, the last being James Daniel Fowler, June, 1941.

As to pilots, there is no such thing as colored aviation at the present time.⁹

As recently as October 1, 1940, the Adjutant General of the War Department wrote to a colored lad whose qualifications were otherwise satisfactory,

Applications from colored persons for flying cadet appointment or for enlistment in the Air Corps are not being accepted.¹⁰

Negroes were practically excluded from the Navy, where they might aspire to no grade higher than mess attendant. There was natural bitterness among Negro leaders at the scarcely concealed Jim Crow lines in the Army and Navy policy.

Negroes cannot help but feel that their country does not want them to defend it.¹¹ The Council for Democracy, headed by Raymond Gram Swing, speaks of this "dangerous and stupid policy which compels one-tenth of our population to fight simply for an opportunity to participate" in the American struggle to preserve democracy.¹²

As the defense program got under way, there were frequent questions as to what part the Negro was going to have in it.

In enlarging the Army to a million men (declared the New York *Age*), it seems clear to us that the Negro should have a proportionate share of the recruits. There are thousands of unemployed Negro youths who could profit by the discipline of military training but no reasonable government should expect them to rally to the flag, if they are to be limited to labor battalions and service units in the Navy and Air Corps.¹³

Is such a procedure a proper application of the democratic process? inquired the Oklahoma City *Black Dispatch*.¹⁴

We are for the national defense program (*Crisis* announced). We have no love for Hitlerism. But we feel the strongest defense of democracy lies in giving all the people a stake in it, not a stake measured by comparison with Hitlerism, but one measured by the professions of democracy itself.¹⁵

Much as the American Negro resented the lack of equality in the United States or the exploitation of darker races by the Euro-

⁹ Walter White, *It's Our Country, Too*, pamphlet, page 2.

¹⁰ Protest of Walter White, A. Philip Randolph and T. Arnold Hill to President Roosevelt, *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 350.

¹¹ "Negro Patriotism Feels Rebuffed," *P.M.*, Oct. 5, 1940.

¹² Council for Democracy, *The Negro and Defense*, pamphlet.

¹³ Quoted by *Crisis*, July, 1940, 211.

¹⁴ Quoted by *Crisis*, Sept., 1940, 289.

¹⁵ "Out in the Cold," *Crisis*, July, 1940, 209.

pean imperialists, he appreciated the nature of the struggle in which Europe was engaged.

The ideology of Adolf Hitler as expressed in *Mein Kampf* relegates the Negro to perpetual serfdom and denies to him every semblance of a legal status.¹⁶

It is certain that the Negro can expect nothing but evil from a totalitarian government, for totalitarianism is the triumph of evil over good, of slavery over freedom, of Dictatorship over Democracy. . . . The Germans are not only waging a war; they are waging a revolution. Their goal is not the mere acquisition of territory; they are even more interested in spreading their faith so that all the world may be woven into a new pattern.¹⁷

Dr. Benjamin F. Hubert of Savannah, chairman of the State Planning Commission, demanded racial opportunity "in proportion to population," and training in all forms of combat service as well as "behind the lines in labor battalions." Dr. L. A. Pinkston of Augusta, head of the State Baptist Convention, favored compulsory military training and insisted that the Negro should get his full share. "If we are going to be drafted for service, we want to be trained for service."¹⁸

The Fish amendment to the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Act forbade discrimination in the drafting and training of men. But lack of housing facilities led to the announcement that local draft boards had been instructed to accept only white men in the early quotas. Negro men, hurrying forward to enlist, were rejected for the same reason.¹⁹ There was no room for them under the segregated system. There was a wave of protest against this discrimination.²⁰ There were about 500 Negro officers, including medical officers and chaplains, on the Army Reserve lists. Most of them had been commissioned during the First World War. None of them were called for service or training.²¹ Howard and Wilberforce had senior R.O.T.C. units. The War Department ignored them completely in making provision for training officers drawn from schools and colleges.²²

Early in the fall the War Department issued a statement of

¹⁶ "The Negro and Nazism," *Opportunity*, July, 1940, 194.

¹⁷ Vincent J. Browne, "A Program for Negro Preparedness," *Opportunity*, Aug., 1940, 230-1.

¹⁸ *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1940, 5:3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, 1940, 10:6; Aug. 20, 1940, 21:1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan. 4, 1941; Jan. 24, 1941, 10:2; Jan. 28, 1941, 13:2; *Crisis*, Jan., 1941, 7.

²¹ White, *op. cit.*, 3.

²² Metz T. P. Lochard, "Negroes and Defense," *Nation*, Jan. 4, 1941, 152:14-16.

policy. Negroes would be used "on the general basis of proportion of the Negro population of the country," but they would be organized into separate units and Negro units now officered by whites would receive no Negro officers other than medical officers and chaplains.²³ Negro leaders were quick to protest against what they called a Jim Crow policy.²⁴

On September 27, 1940, Walter White, Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P.; A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and T. Arnold Hill of the N.Y.A., submitted a seven-point program to President Roosevelt. This memorandum urged that available Negro reserve officers be used to train recruits, and that Negro recruits be given the same training as whites. It requested that existing units of the army be required to accept officers and enlisted personnel on the basis of ability instead of race or color, and that specialized personnel such as Negro doctors, dentists and nurses be integrated into the services. It asked for the appointment of responsible Negroes to draft boards, for the abolition of racial discrimination in the Navy and Air Corps, and recommended the appointment of competent Negro civilians as assistants to the Secretaries of War and Navy.²⁵

On November 9 the White House issued a statement which, in general, endorsed the War Department's policy with the implication that the committee had approved of segregation. According to the President, Negro units would be established in each major branch of the service, but white and colored personnel would not be intermingled in the same regimental organizations. Negro reserve officers would be assigned to units officered by colored personnel. When officer candidates' schools were established, Negroes would be given equal opportunity to qualify for commissions. Negro civilians would be given equal opportunity for employment at arsenals and army posts.²⁶

The committee promptly sent a telegram of protest to the White House (October 10).

We most vigorously protest your approval of War Department policy regarding Negroes in armed forces which precludes Negro officers except chaplains and doctors in regular army units other than two national guard regiments staffed by Negro officers. . . . We further vigorously question your statement that morale is splendid in

²³ New York *Times*, Oct. 16, 1940.

²⁴ Amidon, *op. cit.*; *Time*, Oct. 28, 1940, 36:19.

²⁵ "The Non-Jim Crow Program Presented to the White House," *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 351.

²⁶ "The White House Jim Crow Plan," *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 350.

existing Negro units of the Regular Army. . . . We further question that Jim Crow policy of the army "has been proven satisfactory." It has never been satisfactory nor is it now to Negro Americans. Such segregation has been destructive of morale and has permitted prejudiced superiors to exercise their bigotry on defenseless Negro regiments. We are inexpressibly shocked that a President of the United States at a time of national peril should surrender so completely to enemies of Democracy who would destroy national unity by advocating segregation. Official approval by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of such discrimination and segregation is a stab in the back of Democracy.²⁷

The White House took steps in the direction of "appeasement." On October 25, Colonel Davis was promoted to be Brigadier General, the only Negro ever to reach that rank in the United States Army. Judge William H. Hastie was appointed Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War and Major Campbell Johnson was made executive assistant to Dr. C. A. Dykstra, Director of Selective Service.²⁸ Five more R.O.T.C. units were added at Negro colleges.²⁹ During 1941 all the existing units were mobilized to war strength and new units were created so that about 100,000 Negro soldiers might be included. Some of these were officered by Negro reserve officers on the Army list; others had white officers.³⁰ Early in 1942 the War Department announced that it proposed to recruit 175,000 additional Negro soldiers. This would include Tank Destroyer units, and Interior Military Police battalions to assist in guarding factories, warehouses, bridges, power houses and other critical installations scattered about the country.³¹

²⁷ "White House Blesses Jim Crow," *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 350.

²⁸ *Crisis*, Dec., 1940, 375, 390; *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1940, 34:5. Judge Hastie has since resigned.

²⁹ *New York Times*, May 1, 1942, 10:4. They were West Virginia State Teachers College, Hampton Institute, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, Prairie View State Normal and Industrial Institute, and Tuskegee Institute.

³⁰ *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1940, 11:5; *Time*, Oct. 28, 1940, 36:19; *Crisis*, Nov., 1940, 350.

³¹ *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1942, 19:7. In February, 1942 (pages 48-9), *Crisis* gave a list of the colored units as of that time. According to this list, in the New England Corps Area there were 5,506 consisting principally of the 366th Infantry at Fort Devens, Mass., and the 369th Coast Artillery anti-aircraft at Camp Edwards, Mass. The Second Corps Area contained 3,987 of whom 3,325 made up the 372d Infantry. The Third Corps Area contained 10,204, with the 95th Engineers battalion (1,218) and the Engineers Replacement Center (2,640) at Fort Belvoir, Va.; Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center (1,394) at Fort Eustis, Va.; and the Quartermaster Replacement Training Center (2,610) at Fort Lee, Va. The Fourth Corps Area contained 43,900 with the 99th Pursuit Squadron at Tuskegee Institute (390), 45th Engineers (1,259), at Fort Benning, Ga.; 758th Tank Battalion (512) and 367th Infantry (3,325) at Camp Claiborne, La.; 93d Engineers Battalion (1,218), 350th Field Artillery (1,423), at Camp Livingston, Ala.; 91st Engineers Bat-

At the outbreak of war, there were about 100,000 Negroes in the armed forces of the United States. The pace of induction has been considerably stepped up since then. The army aims at reaching and preserving for the duration of ratio of ten per cent. In contrast to the policy of 1918, Negroes who are candidates for commissions are not trained in a segregated camp but are interspersed with whites in almost all the officer-training schools. White and Negro candidates attend the same classes, get common field practice, and sometimes sleep in the same barracks.³² But outside the officers' classes the whole army picture reflects a continuation of the traditional policy of racial segregation in training and service. The army insists that it did not create the problem and cannot undertake to change the social views of the individual citizens who fill its ranks. Its objective is to achieve maximum success in military training. Army leaders, therefore, refuse to indulge in social experiments such as the establishment of a trial division including Negroes and whites alike, even on a voluntary basis.

Most of the large army camps are located in Southern areas. The small Southern communities nearby seethed with antagonism the moment Negro soldiers appeared in the training camps. The segregation pattern not only resulted in separate units, but in special rows in the cantonment theater, segregation at the camp library and post exchange, and Jim Crow transportation to and from camp. Acts of violence have been reported. The first to receive nationwide publicity was the lynching of Private Felix Hall at Fort Benning, Georgia. Clashes between colored soldiers and whites are reported from Fort Bragg, N. C.; Camp Robinson, Ark., Camp

talion (1,218) at Camp Shelby, Miss.; 76th and 77th Coast Artillery (1,851 each), 41st Engineers (1,259), 96th Engineers (1,218), and Field Artillery Replacement Training Center (1,141) at Fort Bragg, N. C.; 99th and 100th Coast Artillery, anti-aircraft (2,484 each), 54th Coast Artillery (1,811) at Camp Davis, N. C.; Infantry Replacement Training Center (1,141) at Camp Croft, S. C. In the Fifth Corps Area are the 48th Infantry (4,440) at Camp Knox, Ky. The Sixth Corps Area has 4,269 colored troops, the largest units being the 184th Field Artillery (1,655) and 94th Engineers (1,218) at Fort Custer, Mich. The Seventh Corps Area contains 8,779. At Fort Riley, Kans., are the 9th and 10th Cavalry (1,479 each); at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., the Engineers Replacement Training Center (2,405) and 92nd Engineers Battalion (1,218). The Eighth Corps area contains 14,458 including the 25th and 368th Infantry (3,325 each) at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.; the 349th Field Artillery (1,423) at Fort Sill, Okla.; the 98th Engineers (1,218) at Camp Bowie, Tex.; and the Infantry Replacement Training Center (1,563) at Camp Wolters, Tex. The Ninth Corps Area contains a total of 2,567, with no large units. In addition, there are numerous quartermaster detachments, ordnance units, chemical decontamination companies, a sanitary company, and construction companies scattered all over the country.

³² "The Negro's War," *Fortune*, June, 1942; "The Negro in the United States Army," *Crisis*, Feb., 1942, 47.

Gibben and Camp Davis, Wilmington, N. C.; Jackson Barracks, near New Orleans; Camp Lee, Virginia; Fort Dix, New Jersey, and Selfridge Field, Michigan.³³ Such incidents, hardly mentioned in the standard daily newspapers, are well publicized by the colored press and create resentment, made more bitter because the war is proclaimed as one in which we are defending freedom and democracy.

While it is not possible to reveal locations of overseas troops, it is known that Negroes are in foreign service. It is believed that the 24th Infantry participated in the Bataan campaign.³⁴ It is known that Negro troops are in Australia, although they are not combat troops. They are defined as "specially trained ground troops."³⁵ Probably they are working on construction jobs.

The question of aviation early became a thorny one. The National Youth Administration and a number of educational institutions gave the colored men training as aviation mechanics and technical specialists. The 1939 Army Expansion Act authorized the Secretary of War to lend military equipment to at least one accredited civilian aviation school to train Negro flyers. The War Department selected the Chicago School of Aeronautics at Glenview, Illinois. Others were given the preliminary flight training by the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Of the first one hundred Negro college students trained by the C.A.A., 91 qualified for civil licenses, a record quite as good as the performances of white students.³⁶ But it is a matter of record that, in a number of instances, such students were rejected when they applied for further training with the Army Air Corps.³⁷

Late in 1940, the War Department announced that it would establish a separate colored aviation unit, the 99th Pursuit Squadron. Mechanics and a ground crew of about 400 were to be trained at Chanute Field, near Rantoul, Illinois. The pilots were to be trained at Tuskegee Institute. The standards for cadet flying appointments were to be the same as for white cadets. They must be high school graduates, unmarried and between the ages of 20 and 27. Those successfully completing the course would be eligible for commissions as second lieutenants. It was hoped that ultimately

³³ New York Times, Aug. 22, 1941, 1:5; Jan. 12, 1942, 9:7; Apr. 3, 1942, 1:2; Social Action, Jan. 15, 1942, 16:7; NAACP, Annual Report, 1941, 8-10.

³⁴ Crisis, Feb., 1942, 47.

³⁵ New York Times, Mar. 30, 1942, 3:2.

³⁶ Time, Oct. 28, 1940, 36:19.

³⁷ Amidon, *op. cit.*; Lochard, *op. cit.*; "Too dark for the Army Air Corps," Crisis, Sept., 1940, 279; James L. H. Peck, "When do we fly?" Crisis, Dec., 1940, 376; NAACP, Annual Report, 1941, 27-8.

thirty-three pilots might be selected to form the Air Unit.³⁸ Some difficulty was encountered in recruiting the unit because of failure of applicants to meet the educational requirements.³⁹ But ultimately the first five Negro aviators earned their wings and received their commissions.⁴⁰ Early in 1942 the 100th Pursuit Squadron, second all-Negro aviation unit, was begun.⁴¹ Monthly classes of ten or twenty Negro aviation cadets are now being accepted to be trained as pursuit pilots. Some 5,000 Negroes are enlisted as ground crews.

The belated provision for air training, the meager size of the program, and the Jim Crow airfield at Tuskegee are resented by many Negroes.⁴² The goal of the United States Army is 200,000 combat fliers in 1943. But at the rate of graduation, there will be only a few score Negro pilots at that time. Negroes think the race could contribute much more to the air arm if given opportunity.

Second only to aviation is the policy of the army in regard to the Medical Corps. Surgeon General James C. McGee of the Army stated that Negro medical men would be used only in cantonment hospitals and then only in segregated wards. Negro medical officers would not be used in any of the general army hospitals and, in the event of active service, they would not be used in base hospitals. Instead, Negro patients would be accommodated without discrimination in general and base hospitals, receiving the same treatment as other patients.⁴³ As of April, 1941, the Army had called 56 Negro nurses into active service, and 6 Negro dentists, two as regular officers of the 366th Infantry at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and two each at Fort Bragg and Camp Livingston.⁴⁴ It is planned that as Negro officers are called from the Medical Reserve, additional appointments will be made to fill vacancies. Additional nurses will be secured from the Red Cross as needed. Make no mistake about it. There will be Angels of Mercy with brown faces.

³⁸ "Air Pilots but Segregated," *Crisis*, Feb., 1941, 39; *Opportunity*, Aug., 1941, 247-8; *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1941, 10:2; Feb. 11, 1941, 11:4; Mar. 19, 1941, 28:3; Mar. 29, 1941, 9:5; June 20, 1941, 16:21.

³⁹ *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1941, 9:5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1941, 46:21; Nov. 16, 1941, 45:3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 23, 1942, 11:1.

⁴² Amidon, *op. cit.*; Peck, *op. cit.*; *Crisis*, Feb., 1941, 39; Apr., 1941, 103; Edwin R. Embree, "Half Slave, Half Democrat," *American Mercury*, Mar., 1942, 54:323-30.

⁴³ Amidon, *op. cit.* The War Department's Bureau of Public Relations stated in May, 1941, that four regiments have Negro medical officers (8 in all), and that 34 Negro medical officers are stationed at hospitals at Fort Bragg and Camp Livingston, where they serve only in wards for colored troops.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The policy of the Navy is cause for even greater discontent. The United States Navy is open to any white man born in the United States. It accepts sons of Italians, Germans and Frenchmen. But until lately it has excluded Negroes except as servants. No Negro has ever graduated from Annapolis. On June 30, 1940, there were 139,554 enlisted men in the Navy, of whom 4,007 were Negroes, "the majority of whom hold ratings in the Messman branch."⁴⁵ At that time Negroes holding naval ratings other than Messmen were: chief commissary steward, 8; machinist's mate, first class, 7; ship's cook, 9; musician, first class, 1.⁴⁶ If a Negro enlists as a mess attendant, third class, he is obliged to remain in that rating for one year. A white boy is eligible for promotion in three months, and by the end of the year he may be a petty officer. The Negro's promotion is limited and never takes him out of the servant class. He is taught to make up officers' bunks, clean their rooms, shine their shoes, check their laundry, press their uniforms, and serve their meals. He is given no combat training and learns no trade. Engineering, electricity, navigation, radio, gunnery, signaling, carpentry, metal work are not for him. The press relations officer points out:

It would be impractical to man any ship with certain men, whether white or colored, whose only assignment would be confined to that particular ship.⁴⁶

In other words, the practice of the Navy did not make a segregated unit feasible as a compromise solution.

Immediately after the declaration of war by the Axis nations, the Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. sent a telegram to Secretary Knox asking for a change in the Navy's restrictions on the service of colored men "because our country is in peril." An answer was received from the Bureau of Navigation on December 16 stating there was "no change in the Navy's policy regarding the enlistment of men of the colored race and for the time being no change is contemplated."⁴⁷

In April, 1942, the Secretary of the Navy announced that the Navy would accept the enlistment of Negroes for general service in the ranks and as non-commissioned officers, with the assurance that they would have equal opportunities with whites for promotion and naval ratings. The plan was to recruit 1,000 Negroes a month and train them in all skills for sea and shore service. The policy of

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ N.A.A.C.P., *Annual Report*, 1941, 12.

segregation, however, was still preserved since entire Negro crews would be formed for small craft and possibly destroyers. Negroes would also be used for service around shore establishments, navy yards, and in labor gangs building foreign bases. At the same time the Secretary announced that there would be Negro outfits in the Marine Corps and Coast Guard.⁴⁸ Thus the door of opportunity has opened a little wider, although it is not yet very wide. The *Crisis* remarked,

It is a source of sorrow, amazement and shame that in time of war when the United States has suffered defeat after defeat and the fate of this civilization hangs in the balance that a high government official should so abjectly surrender to reactionism. . . . If Negro youth are not good enough to fight alongside their white fellow Americans on land and sea in defense of their country, then this talk of democracy is hollow and meaningless.⁴⁹

There is, perhaps, no issue as little understood as the matter of Negro morale. Some people are inclined to take it for granted that the traditional loyalty of Negroes to America is a quality that is unchangeable. Others believe that what the Negroes think doesn't matter anyway. Still others have given no thought at all to the attitude of the Negro toward the war. When, therefore, colored leaders have raised the question "What are we colored folks fighting for?" those who have never realized the shortcomings of our democracy where the Negro is concerned recoil in horror and jump to the conclusion that Negroes are potential fifth columnists.

As a matter of fact, most American Negroes are opposed to everything for which the Axis stands. Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, president of the National Council of Negro Women, says that in spite of discrimination Negroes feel that the fight against Fascism is their fight, too.⁵⁰ At the same time Negroes note that the same disabilities which the totalitarian states impose upon their unwanted minorities are also imposed by white America upon the Negro racial group. The principal difference is that the Negro suffers in less degree and that the disabilities imposed on him do not have the sanction of federal law. They sometimes do have the sanction of state laws. *Crisis* once placed certain "ideals" of the United States and Naziland side by side. Since the comparison may prove interesting, it is here reproduced:

⁴⁸ New York *Times*, Apr. 8, 1942, 11:4; Apr. 9, 1942, 18:3; May 21, 1942, 11:4.

⁴⁹ *Crisis*, May, 1942, 161.

⁵⁰ New York *Times*, Nov. 14, 1941, 20:1.

Nazi. 1. The colored people are an inferior race whose place must be fixed by the white "master race."

USA. 1. The colored people are an inferior race and must be "kept in their place."

Nazi. 2. The free choice of trades and professions by the Negroes leads to social assimilation, which in turn produces racial assimilation. The occupations of the black colonial peoples and their function in the labor process of the New Order will, therefore, be entirely determined by Germans.

USA. 2. No Southern state provides training in the professions for Negroes. Vocational training is sketchy and not up to date as proved by the lack of up-to-the-minute training by Negro boys seeking skilled work in the defense program. Even where trained, Negroes are shunted to labor and domestic jobs, barred from white collar and skilled work.

Nazi. 3. Intermarriage between whites and blacks or halfbreeds and whites is forbidden. According to the Nuremberg racial laws, sexual intercourse between members of the two races is subject to sanctions, including the death penalty.

USA. 3. Intermarriage between whites and blacks is forbidden by law in twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia. There is no penalty for mere sexual intercourse; as a matter of fact, such intercourse is a recognized institution in some localities where the man is white.

Nazi. 4. Persons belonging to a race other than the white Aryan race will have no active or passive electoral rights in the German colonial empire.

USA. 4. Practically every Southern state has a Democratic white primary election from which Negroes are excluded from voting.

Nazi. 5. Negroes are forbidden access to railways, street cars, restaurants, motion pictures, and all public establishments. Special conveyances and public establishments will be created for them both in Germany and occupied territories.

USA. 5. All Southern states have Jim Crow laws separating the races on all public conveyances and in all public places. Baltimore, Maryland, will not even permit Negroes to spend their money in downtown department stores.

Nazi. 6. Members of inferior races are not allowed to join the National Socialist Party or its subsidiary organizations. Nor can they serve in the army. They must, however, serve in labor battalions.

USA. 6. Except in isolated instances, the Negro may not join and function in the Democratic Party, which is the ruling party in the South.

Until this present emergency they were restricted to two regiments of Infantry and two of Cavalry in the army. In the last World War, they served preponderantly in labor battalions.⁵¹

If America would want to defend itself against Nazi domination and totalitarianism, it first must rid itself of any similarity of ideas common to those existing in Germany and conquered France. . . . It will be inconsistent with good judgment to fight against that which one has already adopted and practiced.⁵²

The sudden concern of the United States over the threats to democracy abroad and the expressed desire to defend its ideals at all costs has surprised and gratified colored Americans. Not since the World War has so much been said about fighting for the rights of oppressed minorities, for equality, justice and freedom for the weak; for the privilege of all men to determine their destiny to the extent of their desire and ability.⁵³

The Negro would feel that the affection for democracy was more sincere if the restriction on Negro suffrage were removed, the Jim Crow car abolished, discrimination in the armed services eliminated, and the job embargo against Negro workers raised. He really wants to see his country a democracy. The conditions which he sees all about him contradict his idea of democracy. Since the first World War Negro veterans have been Jim Crowed by the American Legion; Negro Gold Star Mothers have been Jim Crowed by the War Department; lynching still prospers and it is still "unconstitutional" for the government to do anything about it.

When Japan attacked at Pearl Harbor, Edgar G. Brown, director of the National Negro Council and President of United States Government Employees, telegraphed President Roosevelt,

twelve million American Negro citizens renew today their pledge of one hundred per cent loyalty to their country and our Commander-in-Chief against Japan and all other invaders. Negro youth awaits your call for an unrestricted and full opportunity to serve their country at this critical hour in all capacities of the Army and Navy, the Marines, the Coast Guard, and the Air Corps and National Defense.⁵⁴

The National Urban League pledged its entire national membership to "bend all efforts toward cooperation with the nation's all-out war effort."⁵⁵ Dorie Miller, a Negro messman, distinguished himself while manning a machine gun on the deck of the *Arizona*

⁵¹ *Crisis*, Mar., 1941, 71.

⁵² *Chicago Sunday Bee*, quoted by *Crisis*, Dec., 1940, 387.

⁵³ *Crisis*, Oct., 1939, 305.

⁵⁴ *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1941, 18:5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1941, 24:1.

against Japanese planes at Pearl Harbor. He was awarded the Navy Cross.⁵⁶ Private Robert Brooks, Negro, was the first casualty in the United States armed forces in the Philippine Islands.⁵⁷ Thus Miller and Brooks take their places beside Crispus Attucks who died at Lexington and Robert Gould Shaw who led the famous Black Regiment in the Civil War. Consider the work of Joe Louis, who contributed his entire profits from two fights to the Army and Navy relief! Has any white man done more than these?

On the home front, the Negro is working in defense industries (when he may) and buying War Bonds. While it is impossible to give anything like an accurate account of the amount of his financial contributions (the racial identity of purchasers is not reported on the bonds), Negro insurance companies have purchased upwards of \$2,500,000 worth. Other organizations are known to have purchased \$204,000 more. Reports from Negro schools indicate that 95 per cent of their faculties are bond owners. Farm demonstrators, Jeanes supervisors, Elks and Masonic lodges have also purchased bonds in sizable amounts.⁵⁸

Black Americans are willing to defend democracy today just as they were in 1917. They are not found in the so-called "fifth column" organizations. The face of treason has been seen more than once since Benedict Arnold betrayed his country, but the face has always been white. What the Negro does demand is that his country shall also defend him. He is tired of being a second-class citizen.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Mar. 13, 1942, 7:1; May 28, 1942, 8:4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 23, 1942, 11:1.

⁵⁸ William Pickens, "The Democracy of War Savings," *Crisis*, July, 1942, 221; Letter of Jesse O. Thomas, War Savings Staff, Dept. of Treasury, dated Aug. 21, 1942.

CHAPTER XX

NEGRO LEADERSHIP

In recent years much has been written of "The New Negro." "The New Negro" is a term which is used to designate that portion of the race which has grown race conscious. A number of reasons help to explain the new spirit which has taken possession of the Negro, causing him to become less submissive in the face of contempt and exploitation than in the past. The propaganda of various Negro organizations, urging him to demand his citizenship rights and to oppose all forms of segregation and discrimination, has not been without effect. Large numbers of Negroes have recently come to the United States from the West Indies. These are not accustomed to racial discrimination, and their resentment has communicated itself to the native blacks. Various reactions resulting from the World War and the spread of education among a large element of the race have much to do with the rise of race consciousness. One effect of the World War was an increase of wealth which made it possible for the race to support newspapers and magazines through which the new ideas were spread to the masses. The result of all these influences was a "New Negro," an individual who is less inclined to tolerate conditions he thinks unjust.

The tendency of the dominant white group to enforce residential segregation has produced a Negro economy within the city. Here we find such institutions as the Negro church, the Negro theater, and the Negro newspaper. Negro businesses are springing up and real estate is coming increasingly under Negro control. A professional class and an elite is arising among Negroes. There are dozens of clubs, lodges, trade unions, professional, religious and political associations, and organizations for civic improvement. But these institutions do not correspond to similar institutions among whites. The Negro church is more than a sanctuary devoted to the worship of God; it is an open forum for the discussion of all manner of racial grievances. The Negro press does not discuss important local, national and international issues; it deals almost entirely with racial matters. All these activities are managed by colored people. The newspaper editors are Negroes. The

shop keepers are Negroes. The actors are Negroes. The grand exalted potentates of the lodges are Negroes. With few exceptions, the clergy are Negroes. The doctors, lawyers and real estate agents are Negroes. Through such racial leadership a sense of self-confidence and racial unity is developed. "The time has come," says Mr. DePriest, "when the Negro must quit being ashamed of being a Negro."¹

There is an increasing interest in racial literature, racial music, racial art, racial drama and racial history. There was a time after the Civil War when the Negro would not sing the old Spirituals because they reminded him of an unhappy past. Now they are regarded as one of the great cultural heritages of the race. The *Crisis* and *Opportunity* parade the artistic and intellectual achievements of the race—and these are not small when they are enumerated all at once. Dr. Washington, Dr. DuBois, Dr. Kelly Miller, Dr. Alain Locke, and Dr. Brawley have written books on race achievements, and the last decades have brought many volumes of novels, poetry, biography and music. There has been a tendency to emphasize early African culture and to exploit the part that Negroes have played in building other civilizations. Toussaint Louverture and his black Haitian comrades, Dumas and Pushkin, the literary giants of their day, are remembered as of Negro ancestry. Some have even claimed Robert Browning and Alexander Hamilton as of mixed Negro blood. Negro literature is filled with references to Frederick Douglass, and the picture of George Washington appears less often in Negro school houses than that of his namesake, the great Booker T. Washington. There is a tendency to reject all things white, even the Christian religion. Negro dolls are replacing white dolls as toys for Negro children. They are more expensive than white dolls because they are made in smaller quantities, but Negroes are willing to pay an extra price for them. It is a clear indication of a growing race consciousness.

The creation of a distinctive Negro culture in the midst of a complex civilization raises new problems. As the Negro develops distinct institutions, to that extent he cuts himself off from the only real culture he may hope to acquire. In this connection Dr. Edward Byron Reuter makes the following observation:

The institutions developed by the Negro are more or less faithful copies of corresponding white institutions but, in the nature of

¹ Chicago *Defender*, July 19, 1930.

social progress, they will be inferior to the originals. Separate Negro churches are a source of pride and they afford an opportunity for a Negro ministry and in a large measure serve a peculiar need but they also prevent the attendance of Negroes on more valuable services. The separate Negro schools provide a livelihood for teachers who otherwise would be forced into less congenial occupations but they also mean inferior school facilities for Negro children. Separate institutions are inferior institutions. . . . To the extent that the Negro reads "race literature" to the exclusion of literature he is deprived of an important cultural contact. . . . To the extent that he reads "Negro history" instead of history his knowledge is perverted and his degree of approximation to modern cultural standards is lessened. . . . The emphasis upon "race music" operates to retard the musical appreciation of the people. The similar thing is true of Negro art, Negro drama, and other things "Negro." They occupy the attention of persons and they take the place of available forms, thus functioning to retard the intellectual freedom and the cultural advance of the race.²

Prior to the first World War there were two distinct schools of thought among colored leaders. One emphasized the gospel of hard work and gradual advance. It accepted *status quo* and talked of good will and conciliation. It was composed mainly of Southern Negroes—teachers, preachers, and business men—who worked among the masses of the Black Belt. The other group was composed mainly of Northerners, many of them mulattoes, and was insistent in its demands for "equality." It did not do its revolting silently. A comparison of the desires of the two schools of leaders reveals little substantial difference. Both want:

1. Immediate cessation of interracial violence, especially lynching.
2. Justice in the courts.
3. Better educational facilities.
4. Equality of economic opportunity.
5. Better living conditions in cities, especially paving, lighting, sanitation, and police protection in Negro neighborhoods.

The points on which the groups split are politics and "social equality." The Northern Negro leaders demand the enforcement of the Fifteenth Amendment, while the Southern group know that Southern white people are not willing to countenance a second experiment in Negro suffrage. One group demands the immediate abolition of the Jim Crow ordinances; the other is resigned to endure them because they are the fiat of the ruling class. There

² Edward B. Reuter, *The American Race Problem*, 412-13.

is also a psychological difference between the two types of leadership. One believes in earning rights. The other feels that rights are inherent and demands them. The demand often antagonizes the white man whose good will is necessary. Some think that the aggressive type of leadership actually impedes progress.

Dr. Booker T. Washington was the great exponent of the conciliatory school. Realist that he was, he frankly recognized the existence of race prejudice and shaped his policies accordingly. He avoided issues which were debatable. He said little or nothing about equality with the white race. He recognized the white man's point of view. In his Atlanta address (1895), he said,

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress. . . . The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle, rather than artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house.³

In a word, Dr. Washington urged his race to do the things which were possible rather than to whine over the things forbidden. He thought it better to build upon the sands of expediency than not to build at all. His theory was that the Negro should first devote himself to obtaining economic independence and should leave the adjustment of social relations to the future. While each member of the race should occupy as high a position as he could, the great masses of Negroes were as yet fitted only for manual labor. But that was no disgrace. The Negro should appreciate the fact that labor was dignified. Instead of clamoring for recognition, he should endeavor to get something worth recognizing. He should first become a skilled workman. Industrial education was the medium through which he could be able to rise to higher things. Almost the whole problem of the Negro in the South rests itself upon the fact as to whether the Negro can make himself of such indispensable service . . . that no one can fill his place better.⁴

³ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 221-4.

⁴ Booker T. Washington, *Future of the American Negro*, 216.

Whenever I have seen a black man who was succeeding in his business, who was a taxpayer and who possessed intelligence and high character, that individual was treated with the highest respect by the members of the white race. In proportion as we can multiply these examples, North and South, will our problem be solved.⁵

He urged his people to use every right they possessed. If the state government permitted them to vote, they should exercise the privilege, carefully and thoughtfully. But he believed that some of the rights once held by the Negro had been lost because of inability to use them properly. The Negro should earn his privileges before asking for them. Once the Negro had demonstrated his ability, he believed that human nature would recognize merit regardless of the color of skin in which it was found.

The time will come when the Negro in the South will be accorded all the political rights which his ability, character and material possessions entitle him to.⁶

Here was true "rugged individualism." Washington did not openly attack higher education for Negroes, but he insisted that in getting an education the Negro should acquire something he could use. There was, after all, very little demand for an ability to conjugate Greek verbs. A youth educated away from his environment, he thought, would be as comfortable as the legendary square peg in a round hole; and he would fit just as well in his community. Washington believed that the Negro could achieve most in the South. Here was where the land lay. It could be cheaply acquired.⁷ To those who advocated emigration he replied,

Cast down your bucket where you are—cast it down by making friends in every manly way with the people of all races by whom you are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service and in the professions.⁸

He did not advocate force or resistance in the presence of wrong, but rather a passive attitude.

If the Negro in the South has a friend in his white neighbor and a still larger number of friends in his community, he has a protection and a guarantee of his rights that will be more potent and

⁵ Emmett J. Scott & Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Booker T. Washington, Builder of Civilization*, 189.

⁶ *Up from Slavery*, 234.

⁷ *Future of the American Negro*, 222.

⁸ *Up from Slavery*, 220; cf. *Future of the American Negro*, 202.

more lasting than any our Federal Congress or any outside power can confer.⁹

When he protested, as he sometimes did, against wrongs done his race, his protests were so worded that they were void of offense.¹⁰

The success of Washington's program came in its ready acceptance by the Southern whites. Immediately after the Atlanta address, Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*, wrote: "The whole speech is a platform upon which blacks and whites can stand with full justice to each other."¹¹ Recognizing it as a safe means whereby they could promote Negro education, the South established industrial schools and gradually became converted to the wisdom of a literate Negro race. From these schools went out men who, like Washington, felt that the Negro should begin at the bottom. Tuskegee became the symbol of an idea. The prestige of Washington among his own people increased. He had the philanthropic interests of the country behind him, and his influence among Southern whites was so great that he was able to dictate political appointments among Negroes.

But the death of Washington removed one of the greatest influences for moderation and left this movement without competent leadership. To be sure, his policy of conciliation was endorsed by his successor at Tuskegee, Major Robert Russa Moton. Like Washington, Moton urged the colored man to go into business, secure economic independence and stand on his own feet. He pointed out that Negroes already have established fifty thousand businesses and asserted that there was room for fifty thousand more. Like Washington, he held that the Negro's greatest opportunity is at the South. While he did not actively oppose the "exodus," he advised his people to investigate carefully before leaving their Southern homes. "I have never been more hopeful for the ultimate solution of the race problem," he said.¹²

It is perhaps natural that the Northern "intellectuals" with ability and education comparable to the better class whites should view Washington's conciliatory attitude as a complete surrender. Their idea was that recognition must come through political equality and higher education. To abandon political rights was to give up what was plainly guaranteed in the Constitution. To

⁹ *Future of the American Negro*, 216.

¹⁰ *Up from Slavery*, 236-7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹² *Proceedings of National Council of Social Work*, 1917, 500-3.

be satisfied with industrial education would abandon the race to manual and menial service. They wanted none of the "Uncle Tom" philosophy which "sold out" the race and condemned the Negro to a future where his only opportunities would be those of the servants pictured on the boxes of Cream of Wheat.

It was Dr. William E. Burghardt DuBois, a brilliant Harvard alumnus, then teaching at Atlanta University, who sounded the tocsin of revolt.

Manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and . . . a people who voluntarily surrender such respect or cease striving for it are not worth civilizing.

Criticizing Washington's emphasis on industrial training, he said

Neither the Negro common schools, nor Tuskegee itself could remain open a day were it not for the teachers trained in the Negro colleges.¹³

DuBois sought a solution to the Negro problem in terms of propaganda and legal action. He would fight to secure for Negroes all rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. He thought reforms affecting the Negro's betterment would come only when he cast a ballot and made his voice heard in a constitutionally approved manner.

I hold these truths to be self-evident, that a disfranchised working class in a modern industrial civilization is worse than helpless. It is a menace not simply to itself but to every other group in the community. It will be diseased, it will be criminal, it will be ignorant, it will be the plaything of mobs, and it will be insulted by caste restrictions.¹⁴

In 1905 DuBois organized the Niagara Movement, the object of which was to protest against discrimination in all forms. The demands of the Niagara Movement were a clear break from the Booker T. Washington school of thought.

First, We want full suffrage and we want it now. . . . Second, We want discriminations in public accommodations to cease. . . . Third, We claim the right of free men to associate with such people as wish to associate with us. . . . Fourth, We want the laws enforced . . . against white as well as black. We are not more lawless than the white race; we are more often arrested,

¹³ *Souls of Black Folk*, 50-2.

¹⁴ Paper read at National Interracial Conference, Washington, 1928.

convicted and mobbed. . . . Fifth, We want our children educated.¹⁵

DuBois was the moving spirit in the forming of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. He resigned his position at Atlanta and came to New York to assume the position of Director of Publicity and Research in the new organization. And the *laissez faire* policy in race relations came to an end. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has lobbied extensively for legislation favorable to Negro interests, notably for a federal anti-lynching bill. It has engaged in numerous legal struggles and won several brilliant victories in the courts, among them the Louisville Segregation Case, the Grandfather Clauses, and the defense of the Arkansas peons, condemned to death without fair trial. The propaganda of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is issued through *The Crisis* of which DuBois was, until 1934, the editor. Through *The Crisis* DuBois kept up a persistent agitation for race equality. He inquired pointedly into mob violence and lynching. And he has become more and more bitter. Since the first World War he has been advising his constituency to "fight" if their aspirations for the unqualified rights of American citizens are blocked, and he rejoiced that there were 100,000 black Americans trained to arms!

Without doubt DuBois is the most brilliant Negro in the United States today. But he is unfitted temperamentally to be the leader of his race. An aristocrat and a scholar, his appeal is to the intellect. He has never been one of the toiling black masses, and he is just as incapable of understanding them as they are of following his involved reasoning. His reaction to the color problem is personal, emotional, cynical. Describing his mixed ancestry, he boasts "a strain of French, a bit of Dutch, but, thank God! no Anglo-Saxon."¹⁶ He glories in the fact that for thirty-three years he has "never knowingly raised my hat to a Southern white woman."¹⁷

The World War brought a new element into the situation. In the course of the conflict over 500,000 colored men were drafted and 200,000 of them were sent to France. Here they learned the

¹⁵ Herbert J. Seligmann, "Twenty Years of Negro Progress," *Current History*, Jan., 1929, 29: 614-21.

¹⁶ *Darkwater*, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

art of war. Colored troops fought successfully against white troops, scattering the fear that the white race was invincible. In France they found no Jim Crow car but a wider measure of social equality than they had known before. These were some of the factors which produced the "New Negro" whose resentment freshened when he returned to America with its social and industrial limitations; limitations which appeared all the more odious when he thought of them in the light of the ideals of freedom, democracy and equality for which he fought during the war.

No less a person than the President of the United States had given encouragement to racial hopes. Receiving a delegation of colored clergymen on March 14, 1918, Mr. Wilson is reported to have said:

I have always known that the Negro has been unjustly and unfairly dealt with; your people have exhibited a degree of loyalty and patriotism that should command the admiration of the whole nation. In the present conflict your race has rallied to the nation's call, and if there has been any evidence of slackerism manifested by Negroes, the same has not reached Washington.

Great principles of righteousness are won by hard fighting and they are attained by slow degrees. With thousands of your sons in the camps and in France, out of this conflict you must expect nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights—the same as are enjoyed by every other citizen.

The war ended. The promised equality was not forthcoming even in the North, and certainly not in the South. Residential segregation and social ostracism characterized the Northern cities. With the government in control of the railroads, the Negro soldiers returned to find themselves herded into Jim Crow cars. Southern cities refused admission to public parks and free libraries just as in the pre-war days. Neither the *Croix de Guerre*, an officer's commission, nor wound stripes conferred the right of suffrage in the Southern half of the American republic. Indeed, while the Negro troops were still in France the Ku Klux Klan was revived to meet the peril of the returning Negro soldier. There was an increased outbreak of lynching and mob violence. Washington, Chicago, Omaha, Elaine and Tulsa made it clear that America had learned nothing concerning the race question. Lynchers grew bolder, advertised their purposes in advance and had their photographs taken around the burning bodies of their vic-

tims. It is not strange that hope died and the blacks fought back. *The Crisis* cried,

For three centuries we have suffered and cowered. No race ever gave passive resistance and submission to evil longer, more piteous trial. Today we raise the terrible weapon of self-defense. When the murderer comes, he shall no longer strike us in the back. When the armed lynchers gather, we too must gather armed. When the mob moves, we propose to meet it with bricks and clubs and guns. . . . If the United States is to be a land of law, we would live humbly and peaceably in it; if it is to be a land of mobs and lynchers, we might as well die today as tomorrow.¹⁸

Of this union of hate and fear was born a new radicalism. The new Negro radicals fall into two groups: first, the Negro nationalists who sought self-determination in Africa; and second, those who, compelled to remain in America, were convinced that there is nothing to hope for under the present form of government.

The first is well represented by the nationalistic dream of Marcus Garvey. Garvey came to the United States from Jamaica in 1916. He preached the doctrine of a return to the Dark Continent and the establishment of a Negro World Empire there. He traveled throughout the country soliciting funds for his project. His personality stirred the Negro masses as no other Negro ever had. Wages were high and money poured in from gullible Negroes. Although opposed by many of the greatest Negro leaders, he raised more money in a few years than any Negro organization ever dreamed of. Garvey estimated his followers at from four to six millions, although DuBois thought eighty thousand nearer the proper figure.¹⁹

Garvey was of unmixed Negro blood, and was as strongly opposed to race intermixture as any Ku Kluzer. He glorified the color "black." As he talked of a black state and a black emperor, he conceived the idea of a black God, a black Christ, and an African Virgin Mary. He understood the psychology of the Negro. He knew that an exploited and underprivileged group desires to forget its condition of poverty in dreams of pomp and splendor. That is what Garvey gave his people. In 1921, in the presence of six thousand followers in New York City, he was formally crowned Provisional President of Africa. He established a black court about him, creating dukes and duchesses, and estab-

¹⁸ Sept., 1919, 5: 231.

¹⁹ "Back to Africa," *Century*, Feb., 1923, 105: 539-48.

lishing such decorations as the Distinguished Order of Ethiopia and the Sublime Order of the Nile. He set up an embryo army, the Black Legion, with a full line of commissioned officers in flashing helmets and gold braid. The women were brought into the movement through the organization of Black Cross Nurses. To get his message abroad, Garvey organized a weekly publication, *The Negro World*, which he printed in English, French and Spanish, and sent to all parts of the earth where Negroes live.

Garvey became an international figure. The Provisional President of Africa sent a delegation to the Versailles peace conference to ask that German mandated territories be transferred to the African Empire. Failing here, he served notice on European powers with African colonies or mandates that their tenure was temporary, only until the African Empire should get under way. He admonished Negro peoples everywhere to throw off white sovereignty. A mission was sent to Liberia to negotiate for a colony there. How the Provisional President of Africa proposed to work with the existing government does not appear.

Commercial relations were to be opened between Africa and the important ports of the United States and West Indies. The Black Star Line was incorporated and three ships were purchased. Of course, the bubble burst. The wonder is that it held so long. Neither Garvey nor anyone associated with him knew how to operate ships. If they had known, they could not have succeeded at a time when the United States government was offering the units of the Shipping Board's fleet without being able to find purchasers. In December 1921 the Black Star Line collapsed carrying with it \$800,000 contributed by American and West Indian Negroes. Garvey was convicted of using the United States Mails to defraud and sentenced to a term in Atlanta prison. Thus the grandiose scheme came to an end.

In 1917 A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen organized *The Messenger* as "a magazine of scientific radicalism." *The Messenger* repudiated Washington's doctrine of patience. Its editors thought "no more of Moton than they do of Cole Blease and Vardaman."²⁰ They repudiated even DuBois and *The Crisis*. They repudiated the Republican Party and condemned the Christian Church. In an editorial on Thanksgiving Day, the editors said,

We do not thank God for anything. . . . Our Deity is the toiling

²⁰ *The Messenger*, Oct., 1919.

masses of the world and the things for which we thank are their achievements.

They then proceeded to enumerate these things: the Russian, German, Austrian and Bulgarian revolutions, world unrest, and labor solidarity.²¹ The thesis of *The Messenger* was that since the Negro was for the most part unskilled, without political rights, and subject to exploitation, his interests were identical with the I.W.W.²² During the war *The Messenger* urged Negroes to take advantage of the nation's need and insist that their wrongs be righted, resisting the draft in the meantime. "Think of a Negro proud to be an American!" it sneered.²³ Taking yet higher ground, it said,

We would be glad to see a Bolshevik government in the South. . . . Under the Soviet system, their right to vote would be based upon their service and not upon race and color.²⁴

Whether due to *The Messenger* influence we cannot say, but when I.W.W. leaders were arrested Negroes were found among their number. According to Benjamin Fletcher, a Negro official of the I.W.W., 100,000 Negroes had taken out membership cards in this radical labor organization.²⁵

After the presidential election of 1920 one branch of the Socialist Party broke away and formed the Workers' Party of America, which accepted the "Twenty-one Points" of Moscow. The African Blood Brotherhood, under the leadership of Cyril Briggs, was affiliated with the Workers' Party of America, and became the official Communist organization among Negroes. From this point there are suspicions that authorities from Moscow directed propaganda toward winning the Negro in the United States.²⁶ The Fourth Congress of the Third Internationale, held at Moscow in 1922, resolved to "fight for race equality of the Negro with the white people, as well as for equal wages and political and social rights." The American Negro Labor Congress which convened at Chicago in 1925 is not known to have been backed by Soviet money, although it was openly sponsored by the

²¹ *Ibid.*, Dec., 1919, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, May, June, 1919, 6, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, Dec., 1919, 25.

²⁴ Quoted by H. J. Seligmann, *The Negro Faces America*, 293.

²⁵ Spero & Harris, *The Black Worker*, 331.

²⁶ Earl Browder, *Communism in the United States*, 290-307; *Negro Year Book*, 1931-2, 151-8.

Workers' Party of America.²⁷ It was presently taken over by the Russian Soviet which made it a medium through which Communist propaganda could permeate the American Negro masses.

Prior to 1931 Communism made little headway among Negroes except to recruit a college graduate here and there. Radical doctrines appeal chiefly to industrial workers and the Negro had only begun to enter industry. Professor Robert Kerlin finds an editorial in the Denver *Star* expressing the sentiment of the overwhelming majority of colored weeklies: "We cannot win by . . . exchanging what we now have for a condition far worse than what we have...."²⁸ "Bolshevism is a product peculiar to the white man," said Robert S. Abbott in the Chicago *Defender*, "and we have no desire even to sample the product."²⁹ The "economic radicalism" of *The Messenger* ran counter to the Negro's orthodox religious traditions. For while sadly disillusioned, the Negro masses were not yet atheists. But, perhaps most significant was the failure of "social equality" to function in practice as in theory. White Communists at Seattle drew the color line at dances. At Detroit Negro Communists were violently driven from a party social. And elsewhere disorders clearly demonstrated that American "reds" were not color-blind.³⁰

The entering wedge for radicalism was when the Communists entered the Scottsboro case. Some Negroes joined the Unemployment Council's spectacular pilgrimage to the New York State legislature to demand relief and unemployment insurance. The failure of the legislature to offer any sort of constructive program may have deepened the disillusionment of some Negroes and heightened the prestige of the Communists. Even such a thinker as Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, while repudiating any connection with Communism, charged that the American church, both Protestant and Catholic, had thrown itself on the side of segregation while Soviet Russia had made it a crime to take cognizance of color. "I believe it better to have the

²⁷ A. L. Harris, "Negro Labor's Quarrel with White Workingmen," *Current History*, Sept., 1926, 24: 903-8. *Vid.* "Communist Propaganda among Negroes," *Commonweal*, Mar. 11, 1931, 13: 508; "To turn Negroes into Reds," *Lit. Digest*, July 30, 1927, 94: 13; *Chicago Defender*, July 12, 1930; *The Crisis*, July, 1921, 22: 103; "Bolshevizing the American Negro," *Independent*, Dec. 5, 1925, 115: 631.

²⁸ Sept. 27, 1919, Quoted by Kerlin, *Voice of the Negro*, 156.

²⁹ Rollin Lynde Hartt, "When the Negro comes North," *World's Work*, May, 1924, 48: 83-9.

³⁰ Cyril Briggs, "Our Negro Work," *Communist*, Sept., 1929, 8: 494-501.

blunders of Russia than the lukewarm, teaspoon thought we put forth," he concluded.³¹

The depression hit the Negro severely. He lost his job. He was evicted from his home. He walked the streets hungry. Even the slight foothold which he had gained on the ladder of economic advancement was lost. Chain stores reached out to crush the corner grocery. Small banks failed, and most Negro banks were small. Negro business firms toppled. States reduced the funds available for Negro education. Negro teachers went unpaid; they were hungry, too. Mr. Roosevelt's reform program failed to "reform." From the Negro's point of view, the N.R.A. was anything but helpful. The Negro sharecropper plowed his cotton under, but the landlord got the check. It was fertile soil for Communist seeds. Each night speakers might be heard explaining revolutionary doctrines to eager groups along the streets of large cities. They emphasized the Negro's disabilities in the "land of the free"; they called attention to the lynchings in the "home of the brave"; they talked of Scottsboro, of Angelo Herndon,³² of unemployment under the capitalistic system, and of discrimination in the "house of God." Negro newspapers and magazines carried a great many articles written by Communists or favorable to Communism. An inquiry which *The Crisis* made of the editors of the leading Negro newspapers brought evidence that many of these leaders of Negro thought were of a decidedly "pink" shade.³³

In the South the Communists were at work, too. Here they directed much of their attention to the organization of Negro share croppers. Two movements were under way: the Share-croppers' Union in Alabama and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in eastern Arkansas. The Communists claimed a membership of 10,000 in these two unions.³⁴ The reaction of Southern whites to these organizations was an instinctive one. Not only was it manifest in the Angelo Herndon case, but a pamphlet of the N.A.A.C.P.

³¹ New York Times, Jan. 3, 1931, 5:7.

³² Herndon, a Negro radical who was involved in the organization of share croppers, was accused of inciting insurrection, convicted and sentenced to the chain gang under a pre-Civil War statute. As in the Scottsboro case, the Communists conducted his defense and he was ultimately freed by the United States Supreme Court.

³³ "Negro Editors on Communism," *Crisis*, Apr., May, June, 1932, 39: 117-19, 154-6, 190-1.

³⁴ James W. Ford & James S. Allen, *The Negroes in Soviet America*, p. 15, quoted by John T. Gillard, *Christ, Color and Communism*, 64.

listed seven Negroes lynched within a period of fifteen months because of their connection with the share croppers' movement.³⁵

Commenting on the fact that two million cotton picking Negroes had been put on the economic scrap heap, Rev. Dr. Mark A. Dawber, Secretary of the Protestant Home Missions Council, thought that 20,000 Negroes had joined the Communist Party.

Thousands of Negroes are joining the Communists because Communists go to the Negroes with an essentially Christian attitude. They call the Negro "brother" and say "There is no segregation in our organization."^{35a}

Visualizing a continuous Black Belt from Virginia to Texas in which Negroes form the majority of the population, the Communists proposed to establish "self-determination" in this belt. "Self-determination" meant the creation of an autonomous state, with provision for its secession from the Union and the ultimate establishment of a Negro Soviet Republic.³⁶ The Communists claimed to be in favor of international peace but, they insisted, "Negroes, to prevent war, must join the Communist Party, abjure imperialist war, and prepare for civil war."

The Communist Party did not attract as many Negroes in 1940 as in the two previous campaigns. The security of W.P.A. caused many to turn away from Moscow. Some Negro leaders were booted out of the party to make way for white organizers. The number of Negro leftists today seems to be small. As Mr. George S. Schuyler points out, a proletarian revolution would put the white laboring masses in control. In the South it is these poor whites who insist most strongly on segregation, Negro disfranchisement, and keeping the Negro "in his place" through terror. In the North, the same white proletarians have excluded black workers from the unions and forced them back into the economic fringes of low pay at unskilled labor. Every advance the Negro has made since Emancipation was in face of the stubborn opposition of this white proletariat. The Negro will think twice before he will perform any act to put this group in control. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the Negroes as a whole are dissatisfied and resentful of the undemocratic treatment accorded them as America prepares to defend "our way of life." After all, how can democracy have meaning to men who are deprived of an opportunity to work because of their color?

³⁵ *Can the States Stop Lynching?* 1936.

^{35a} *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1938, 24:1.

³⁶ James S. Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 169-203; James S. Allen, "The Communist Way Out," *Crisis*, May, 1935, 42: 134-6.

In the January 1943 issue of *Crisis*, DuBois proposed that Negroes ask the government for some subsistence homestead colonies so that they would not be bossed and controlled by white men. According to the N.A.A.C.P., he asked for segregation, and before it was over DuBois broke with the organization he had founded. What Dr. DuBois actually proposed (and he returns to this thesis in his latest book, *Dusk at Dawn*) was a Negro nation within the nation. Negroes alone were to supply all the goods which Negroes consumed. Actually, that would amount to a Negro boycott on all goods produced by non-Negroes, although Dr. DuBois does not precisely say so. Claude McKay, in *A Long Way from Home* and *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, shares the view that present conditions are unalterable; the white leopard is incapable of changing his spots.

Is there a solution to the American race problem? No one who seriously considers the problem will contend that a wrong begun over three hundred years ago and complicated by more than fifty years of suspicion and distrust can be immediately corrected by the application of some Golden Rule formula. As Dr. Frank Tannenbaum once reminded us, there are two types of solutions to practical problems: the possible and the impossible, and the impossible ones are not solutions at all.³⁷

The solution offered by one type of Negro leader is that race prejudice is unreasonable and must be suppressed; that while both races may practice voluntary segregation, there must be no legal separation in residential districts, schools, churches, amusement halls, restaurants or vehicles of travel. The only check on intermarriage would be the desires of the parties themselves. All that is necessary to make this solution effective is that the white people, North and South, shall love their neighbors as themselves. The fact that it has never been done does not prevent people from talking about it, and the very suggestion increases racial antagonism. We have seen that even Northern cities, with no legal segregation, do, as a matter of fact, enforce segregation through public opinion which has a force stronger than that of law. A Negro may exercise his right to live in a white residential district, but if he does so he will probably regret it for social ostracism, if not violence, is sure to follow. One cannot easily get around it. America is not color blind, and it is just as well to recognize the fact. It is not probable that Congress will ever

³⁷ "A Shortage of Scapegoats," *Century*, Dec., 1923, 107: 210-19.

again undertake the task of regulating race relations by federal legislation. For there is a general feeling, even in the North, that the federal government erred in hastily granting the ballot to the freedmen. Neither is there any solution to be found in the blacks taking up arms and securing their rights by force. Brilliant propagandists may counsel the use of force and talk of "nobly dying" but "that way madness lies." Outnumbered nine to one, to oppose discrimination by armed force is suicidal. To fight through the courts is equally futile, since the success of litigation depends, in the long run, upon mass sentiment.

Equally impossible is the suggestion often heard by ignorant persons (and Senator Bilbo³⁸) that all the Negroes should be shipped back to Africa, a sort of Zionist movement applied to Ethiopia. One reason why that will never be done is that Negroes who have set themselves up in business and have acquired considerable property in America desire to remain where they are. They will remain as far from Africa as most Jews from Jerusalem. There were probably not half a dozen educated Negroes in America who were genuinely interested in Garvey's proposition. Viewed in the light of Europe's forced migrations, Mr. Bilbo's scheme of mass repatriation is one with Hitler's Semitic purge.

Yet another solution is sometimes suggested: give the Negroes a state in the Union and move them there just as the Indians were once removed to present-day Oklahoma. The major difficulties of the African deportation scheme would be present here also, and the additional one that it is impossible to keep people within definite barriers. All these are impossible solutions.

All things considered, the policy of constructive economic and social development of the Negro is the most statesmanlike program for the race simply because it reckons with facts and looks toward possible progress. Dr. Richard R. Wright was not far wrong when he said,

If we should put half as much energy into developing our economic resources as we have in agitating for a civil rights bill, we would carry ourselves far ahead.³⁹

History does not show that the Negro has been helped by the sentimental theorists who would sweep aside facts and insist on imme-

³⁸ New York *Times*, Feb. 18, 1938, 11:5; Apr. 25, 1939, 16:4; *Time*, May 8, 1939, 33:14.

³⁹ *Christian Recorder*, Apr. 28, 1921.

diate radical changes which may be theoretically just, but which nine-tenths of the country is not ready to grant. The Negro problem is rooted both in biology and prejudice and is complicated by the further fact that the political, social and economic system of the United States was constructed originally without any thought with respect to the Negro as a citizen, and the Civil War amendments have been ineffective in extending to the Negro the rights and privileges thereby guaranteed. There is no immediate solution for the Negro problem.

This does not mean that we cannot set about eliminating the numerous injustices regarding which the better elements of both races are in agreement or that we need not educate the public in regard to fundamental facts concerning race problems. The cessation of economic exploitation, proper living conditions in cities, the ending of lynching, a guarantee of justice in the courts, provision for better educational facilities and the right to vote subject to an educational qualification honestly administered seem to the author to be a reasonable goal toward which to work.

What the Negro needs most at this moment is the friendship and cooperation of his white neighbors among whom the lives of most must be spent, for none of these things are possible without such support. Possibly the most hopeful signs are various types of interracial bodies created for the purpose of cooperation which have sprung up in many parts of the South. Atlanta had an interracial commission as early as 1907. Other cities have followed more tardily. In some, as in Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans, the initiative was taken by the chambers of commerce; in other cities by the local ministerial association. At least two Southern states have departments of Negro Welfare. In one case the department is headed by an outstanding colored social worker; in the other colored assistants are employed. Valuable work in interracial understanding has been done by the Interracial Committee of the Southern Y.M.C.A., the Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the University Commission on Race Questions, the Southern Sociological Congress, and especially by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. The last is a bi-racial organization, composed of the leading men and women of their section—ministers, college presidents and professors, judges, business men, and religious and social workers. It has headquarters at Atlanta and works through state and local commissions scattered throughout the South. In

the meetings of these bodies, the best elements of both races work together for interracial progress and understanding. They recognize that there may be differences of opinion on certain questions, and that it is therefore futile to discuss them. They confine their work to what is practicable. Much of the effort has centered on securing laws to protect the Negro from mob violence. The state commission of Georgia did an effective bit of work in the prosecution of the Williams peonage case. Other commissions have prosecuted accused lynchers and paid the expenses of litigation in several cases of flagrant injustice. Local commissions work for adequate educational facilities, civic improvements, more efficient police protection, hospitals, better travel accommodations, and recreational advantages. Largely as a result of such efforts, the school term has been lengthened in some places, the salaries of colored teachers have been increased in others, and scores of fine school buildings have sprung up. Some cities have extended sewer systems into the Negro quarters; others have created hospitals, libraries, parks and playgrounds for the use of their colored population. Georgia and South Carolina have put colored nurses in the state departments of health for special work in the schools and homes of Negro children. Of equal importance, perhaps, is the fact that Negro welfare agencies, such as the Urban League, the Y.M.C.A., orphanages, day nurseries and hospitals, are being included in the budgets of community chests.⁴⁰ Courses in race relations are given in more than a score of Southern colleges.⁴¹ In cities like Nashville, Atlanta and New Orleans, containing both white and colored colleges, students are holding mixed seminar groups and round table discussions. Lecturers are exchanged. Sometimes there are interracial debates. There is considerable spirited but friendly rivalry between choral groups. Here is something practical in the solving of the race problem. Despite these notable gains, it would be folly to deny that the greatest part of the work of conciliation remains to be accomplished and that demagogues of both races who fatten on passion and prejudice are doing what they can to nullify the work.

What the South has done might well find imitation in many a Northern city. Strange to relate, most Northern cities have

⁴⁰ "Race barriers slowly crumbling," *Lit. Digest*, Feb. 12, 1927, 92: 34; "The South solving the race problem," *Lit. Digest*, Apr. 19, 1924, 81: 33.

⁴¹ Will W. Alexander, "The Negro in the New South," *Annals*, Nov., 1928, 140: 145-52; W. D. Weatherford, "Growing Race Cooperation," *Survey*, Oct. 16, 1920, 45: 88-90.

pursued a policy of benevolent neutrality so far as the race question is concerned. The nearest approach to a constructive program is laid down by the National Urban League, a Negro organization, supported by white philanthropy. This organization has its headquarters in New York City with more than forty local offices in the chief industrial centers. The author of this volume has sat in many meetings of the Urban League where leaders of both races discussed alleged discriminations and considered together how the rights of the minority group might be best protected. Insisting that what the Negro needs is "not alms but opportunity," the National Urban League devotes its principal efforts to adjusting rural Negroes to their urban development and securing places for them in Northern industry.⁴²

The solution of our race problem is education: education of the whites that they may understand that the denial of rights to minorities is just as dangerous to democracy in the United States as it is in Europe. If life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are among the inalienable rights of mankind, do they not belong to the dark minority as well as to the white majority? There are between 12,000,000 and 13,000,000 Negroes in the United States. If every man among them were to buy one more cotton shirt a year, and every woman just one more dress, we would not have to worry about the cotton surplus. If every Negro family could afford one more loaf of bread a week, we would not have to worry about the wheat surplus. If a non-discriminatory policy were followed in industry, the purchasing power of this submerged tenth would be raised. If these millions of American citizens had decent wages to satisfy their wants, that would go far toward eliminating the overproduction of our factories which is one cause of our cyclical depressions. Once more, we have engaged in war for the liberty of oppressed peoples of Europe. The black American is willing and anxious to join in that fight, too. But he wants some of that liberty for himself and his people. White America, shall he have it?

⁴² E. Franklin Frazier, "The American Negro's New Leaders," *Current History*, Apr., 1928, 28: 56-9; Abram L. Harris, "Negro Problem as viewed by Negro leaders," *Current History*, June, 1923, 18: 410-18.

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